sewage system which was poorly provided for on the shores of a small lake. Gail Fondahl also notes several cases of the "poor siting of settlements" in the Transbaikal region (1998: 65). In general, the consolidation of villages was part of a larger effort to control and discipline Soviet citizens on the frontier. In the process of consolidation, a greater degree of sedentarization was enforced and a greater degree of dependence on the Soviet system realized.

By the time the Soviet Union began to recover from the effects of the 'Great Fatherland War',[33] Soviet planners had made significant inroads in the alteration of Evenkis' traditional mixed forest economies. The centralized economy that was firmly established in this period demanded massive economic unifications and standardizations. The industrialization of reindeer herding—which meant the application of scientific method and the mechanization of technologies—reinvented reindeer breeding as a branch of the modern northern economy. According to Aleksandr Pika, "the introduction of the 'shift-work method' in reindeer herding . . . has gradually destroyed traditional livelihoods and values" (Pika 1999: 96). The 'shift-work' method further challenged traditional Evenki systems of paths beyond the already disastrous removal of women and children from the land. Ideally, all people were to be sedentarized. Those working in distant regions of the taiga were to benefit from the technological triumph over space through mechanized travel, as well as the schedules of modern socialist labour. This triumph of time and distance is a feature of modernity noted also by Rod Bantjes in his work on vehicles and mobility on the Canadian prairies in the first half of the twentieth century (1993; 2000). Mechanized conveyance is at the heart of this triumph. "Speed" writes Bantjes, is "the modernist motif for the conquest of space, time and tradition" (2000: 121). The shift-work method, enabled through new technologies of mechanized mobility, would shuttle herders between the reindeer camps—wherever they might be—and their home settlement.

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[33] In North America, referred to as the Second World War.

4.6. The Soviet system of mechanized travel

> [T]he appearance of modern equipment in the taiga—aircraft, automotive vehicles, motorboats, portable movie projectors, radiotelegraphic communications and the like—have resulted in deep changes in the personalities of the natives in the taiga. [Tugolukov 1963: 35]

> The face of the old settlements, the nomadic encampments, and even the very occupations of the people underwent a profound change. [Rytkheu 1980: 23]

In the language of early-twentieth-century anthropology, Shirokogoroff wrote interchangeably of the "Tungus system of paths" and the "Tungus system of communications" (1935).[34] It follows that a Soviet system of mechanized travel can be examined in the same fashion. This system is tightly bound to European modernities; cultural logics that have particular commonalities and histories of dissemination, interpretation, and co-optation. It was not, however, until the period of 'high socialism' that the celebrated triumphs of modernity were really extended through the Soviet system of mechanized travel. Until this time the Soviet project was very much in the process of constructing foundations.

This section lays out the development of a distinctly modern system of mechanized conveyance in Soviet east-central Siberia. In the latter part of the Soviet era, as industrialization and northern development expanded to include the Enisei basin, a system of state-approved corridors of travel emerged in conjunction with the mechanization of the means of conveyance, notably airplanes, tracked vehicles, trucks, snowmachines, and motorboats. These travels included regular flights between the taiga and remote settlements, remote settlements and regional centres, and regional centres and major cities. According to Uvachan, an aerial route was established between Krasnoiarsk and Dudinka, a 1,600-kilometre journey, in 1932 (1971: 235). By 1935, Tura and Baikit were connected to the growing network of aerial navigation (ibid.). The revolution in transport brought Siberia and the Far East into much greater contact with European Russia. This sustained contact, in turn, facilitated the Soviet state's policies towards the modernization and administration of indigenous peoples (Grant 1995). Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath report a similar experience for the Mongols and Buriats of Inner Asia:

> Far from being a time of stability, the socialist period emerges here as a period of almost ceaseless change. A common theme is collectivization, which started in all areas of Inner Asia with small co-operatives, subsequently amalgamated into large and more rigidly organised collectives or communes. The years of 'high socialism' in the late 1950s to early 1980s were succeeded by a variety of forms of 'privatisation' throughout the region. [Humphrey & Sneath 1999: 35]

A typical characterization of the Soviet economic and social reorganization marks collectivization and sedentarization as the most acute points of Soviet violence towards Evenkis, their cultures, their economies, and, in my own configuration, their system of paths.

> [The] tragedy of the Evenkis began with the period of collectivization. At this point the Kolkhozy [collective farms] became the owners of the Tayga lands, later it was the sovkhozy and gosprokhozy. Forest inhabitants lost the basis of life—their clan and family lands. [Grigorevna 1992 quoted in Fondahl 1998: 57]

While most scholars start their analysis of the incursion of State forms of social and economic organization with the civil war which followed the communist revolution (Fondahl 1998; Pika 1999), Anderson (2000b: 37) notes that the most radical changes to everyday life occurred in the 1960s—the era of industrialization. As for the establishment of a distinctly Soviet system of mechanized travel, the removal of women and children from the taiga was certainly an important beginning and eventually set the foundations for more intensive changes. While organizational changes made significant

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[34] In context of pre-telegraph history, communication was synonymous with bodily transport with special emphasis on the union of the subject and the object through space. It also operates as a synonym in Russian: *sviaz'*.

contributions to the alteration in the mobility of many Evenkis, I would agree with Anderson that it was not until the state's scientists sought to modernize the forest economies that the Evenkis' system of paths, maintained by hunters and herders, was truly challenged.

Soviet modernization and development of northern regions occurred on both the levels of industrial expansion and exploitation of natural resources and of the reorganization of local industries (Kuoljok 1985: 51-2). Kuoljok, however, makes the rather naive point that industrialization hadn't threatened 'reindeer-breeding' in the Soviet North because of a nationality policy that preserved "the specific character of each people" (Kuoljok 1985: 52). The other reason for this, she states, is that polluting industrial complexes were not extensively cast upon the Siberian landscape. Their concentration in industrial centres, along with the "shortage of roads and railways in the North" (Kuoljok 1985: 52) supposedly protected reindeer industries. David G. Anderson's ethnography of the Khantaiskoe Ozero Evenkis in the Taimyr provides evidence of the broad effects of heavy metal pollution on reindeer herds (2000b: 62-63). Development in Yamal, and nuclear testing on the border of Yakutia and Evenkiia in the Viliui basin would also suggest that in Soviet times ecological preservation was certainly not the case (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999; Yegorova 1994).

For Siberia in general, the momentum of industrialization picked up after 1956 (Kuoljok 1985: 52). Koviazin and Kuzakov write that in Evenkiia between 1955 and 1956 "the 'land tenure regulation' [*zemleustroitelnaia*] expedition of the ministry of rural economy of the RSFSR gave each kolkhoz concrete recommendations in the use of reindeer pastures" (96). The actual implementation of these recommendations was yet to follow. In the Taimyr "[b]eginning in the late 1960s, a . . . division of labour was enforced by the state. The entire stock of reindeer was divided into separate herds to be managed by professional brigades" (Anderson 1995a: 57). The socialist reorganization of Evenki economies was an important part of what Aleksandr Pika pointedly refers to as the "marked experiments of social engineering aimed at destroying nomadic ways of life" (1999: 96). Breaking Evenki autonomies was meant to produce good Soviet citizens. As Uvachan wrote, "The peoples of the North, as equals, have entered into a new historic community—the Soviet people" (1971: 292).

Through the period of high socialism, Ekonda's economy was dominated by compartmentalized land-based activities such as hunting, trapping, and reindeer herding. A fur farm had been established, and cows, pigs, and chickens were brought in to replicate southern diets. One major sovkhoz was established and appears to have been closely tied to the village administration. There was no hospital but the local nurse-practitioner and midwifery clinic [*feld'sherskii-akusherstvennyi punkt*] was always staffed and was stocked with medicines. Visits were made to Ekonda by general practitioners, dentists, eye doctors, as well as photographers, and, occasionally, entertainment troupes. The were also permanent positions for the librarian and recreational staff for the culture club which had facilities for musical instruction as well as a gymnasium for volleyball and badminton which also operated as a theatre for movies and drama, a dance hall, and a community hall for large meetings.

In 1995 I encountered a reindeer herder whose travels in the late 1960s truly exemplify the Soviet system of mechanized travel. In late September, before the snow had fallen, I was taken by my hosts several kilometres downriver from Olenek to meet a man who was pasturing a small herd of reindeer. Once a part of Kharealakh's sovkhoz, the reindeer had been redistributed under privatization in the early 1990s. As we sat in the tent drinking tea, eating fish, and exchanging stories and news, my host explained to me that this herder had once been a tourist like me. Just as I came to Siberia, so too had he been to Canada! In 1966 the herder won a socialist competition for over-fulfilling his production quotas by nearly 200 per cent. His prize was to travel to the 1967 World's

Fair in Montreal (along with a giant bust of Lenin). While the Soviet state allotted significant rewards of travel and vacation through socialist competitions, most people had access only to the Soviet corridors of travel within the USSR. The travel experiences of many people in Siberia during the Soviet era were truly extensive in an increasingly well-travelled world.

Concerted industrial exploitation of the northern regions began in central Siberia in the 1970s and 1980s (Pika 1999: 90). According to Alexia Bloch, the Evenki Autonomous District was "not flooded with a wave of incomers, or *priezhi*, until the 1970s. . .[nonetheless] radical shifts in Evenk social organization and traditional culture from the 1920s to 1990s" (1996: 43) resulted from the intensification of state control. Industrial modernization was understood as a prerequisite for the success of socialism. For the paradigm of modern socialism to "make sense, however, a concept of traditional culture was emphasized to set the modernization process off in relief" (1996: 66). This is graphically portrayed in the juxtaposition of modern and traditional technologies, or, in the Marxist-Leninist language of the day, 'progressive' and 'backward' technologies. All aspects of the Soviet economy were expected to conform to the new standards of scientific management, including the most 'traditional' occupations like reindeer herding, hunting, trapping, and fishing.

Tugolukov notes that "collective farms began to organize their reindeer herds by sex and age, to develop rational grazing circuits and to improve the breed" as early as the mid-1950s (1963: 28). Tugolukov is clearly supportive of the science-based management that was developed to replace what were perceived to be 'primitive' and 'non-rational' forms. Until the 1970s, reindeer breeding was an extension of the transport economy, supporting countless other enterprises like hunting, fishing, trapping, state surveys, military forays, geological explorations, delivery of medicine and food, and the conveyance of people.

> The reindeer is a draft animal indispensable in commercial hunting of fur animals. Reindeer transportation is used by geological surveyors, prospecting expeditions, in land management and for other purposes. Reindeer are used to transport freight to remote and otherwise inaccessible regions. [Zhigunov 1968: 1]

Anderson writes that "in order to support the hunting economy in the era before snow machines (pre-1970s) reindeer were bred, trained, and kept for transport (and not for meat)" (1995a: 57). The growing emphasis on economies that were based on modern science and machines sought to rationalize traditional economic practices which were denigrated as backwards, inefficient, and non-socialist.

> To undertake this massive transition in the north the popularization and introduction of scientific achievements and the experience of leading breeders, and finally, training qualified reindeer breeding experts. . .[were needed]; these measures would improve the efficiency of reindeer breeders, increase the output of reindeer meat and other products, cut the cost of production, and raise the level of reindeer husbandry. [Zhigunov 1968: 4]

Anderson writes that in the particular division of labour required for "an economy founded upon reindeer for transport, labour of people and animals maximized the mobility of individuals across a vast territory and thus minimized the capacity of the state to control the structure of work units, the number of deer, and the uses to which they are put" (1995: 57). In the industrialization and mechanization of northern 'agriculture', the capacity of Evenkis to resist and creatively interpret state forms of social organization diminished. The compartmentalization of 'professions' delivered greater control over mobility to the state. As 'experts' emerged from urban universities and colleges, self-determination in the traditional economies such as hunting and herding was often reduced due to conflicting strategies for herd management, hunting, and fishing. "The gospromkhozy were set up to concentrate specifically on hunting, and had little incentive to encourage reindeer herding, other than as an auxiliary activity which supported hunting (as a means of transport)" (Fondahl 1998: 74). S.P. Popov writes that

> [t]he basic unit of commercial hunting is a team of 8-10 hunters . . . In winter, this team needs 80-100 riding reindeer, while in summer 50-60 suffice. This arrangement has proved itself in a number of kholkhozes of Evenki National District and the southern part of Yakut ASSR. [Popov in Zhigunov 1989: 209]

However, it was also in the 1970s that snow machines began to appear as an alternative to reindeer transport.

Land tenure regulation and 'scientific management' certainly marks a beginning in the new management strategies that came to dominate in the 1970s. Aside from the "ideological motivations, a driving incentive behind the collectivization movement was the need to generate and access a surplus of foodstuffs and other goods for the growing urban populations in the Russian North" (Fondahl 1998: 58). In addition, development policy in the Soviet Union aimed at "the creation of industrial employment in the midst of regions that [had] for centuries relied on 'weakly developed productive forces'" (Anderson 1991: 13). The notion of cultural and economic 'backwardness' was clearly implicated in this effort, a lingering irritation from the earliest days of Soviet development policy. Herding and hunting brigades were pushed to produce ever greater quantities of meat to feed massive administrative centres like Tura and Olenek.[35] A report entitled "Development of the Technology for Producing Reindeer in the USSR" outlines the thoroughly modern and scientific approach to reindeer herding in Siberia; the authors state:

> The prospects for development in this field [of reindeer breeding] are determined by important economic goals such as strengthening northern economy, improving the prosperity of indigenous peoples, [and] establishing a local food supply . . . Thanks to Lenin's national policy which is being carried out by the Soviet government, reindeer breeding is developing successfully . . . [Koshelev and Muchachev 341: 341]

Through the Soviet era, the Evenki system of paths was perpetuated where possible in the cycle of production herding, but most importantly in commercial hunting.

In other cases, however, the reproduction of aspects of the system of paths was not supported due, for example, to the inaccessibility of the land for many women and children. Geographic shifts from forest to settlement to consolidated settlement "served to decrease the range of a woman's activities, her cultural and economic options and flexibility, and to channel younger women increasingly away from any level of involvement in such traditional activities" (Fondahl 1998: 69).

Ilimpii Evenkis refer commonly to one particular story that is taken to be a typical botched attempt by the state to manage hunting practices.[36] Until the 1980s Evenki hunters were able to hunt the wild herds of sea caribou [*morskie*] without travelling great distances.[37] Around the mid-1980s the *gospromkhoz* Turinskii, with the assistance of the Evenki District Department of Agriculture and the Scientific Institute for Rural Economy (based in Noril'sk), set up long fences made of drift net across the tundra. These nets were meant to funnel the migratory caribou to convenient stations where they could be shot *en masse* and 'efficiently' harvested. The project was eventually abandoned, leaving the nets strewn across the tundra and the caribou's migration routes altered. This is considered one of the most disastrous events in the history of Ekonda. The relative wealth of the northern neighbouring village, Essei, is partially linked to its proximity to the caribou's current migration route. This is a point aggravated by the fact that Ekonda Evenkis report that the sea deer used to migrate south of their own settlement, a claim supported in Glafira Vasilevich's ethnography (1969: 55). Since this experiment, hunters have had to travel hundreds of kilometres north to encounter the sea caribou and it is

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[35] In Tura today, it seems that reindeer meat is not highly valued. As early as the last decade of the Soviet era wild and domestic reindeer meat is reported to have been sent off to feed prison populations on the Enisei.

[36] It is, however, not clear if Evenki hunters feel that management itself is faulty or if it is simply the ineptitude of the current managers. Looking to other subarctic examples (Fienup-Riordan 1990; Feit 1979, 1991) one is tempted to read the reaction as a point of intercultural contention.

generally agreed that they can now be found around lake Murukta.[38] The logistical difficulty of making such a trip, given the failure of mechanical transport and limited access to domestic reindeer, keeps many Evenki within much more limited bounds and forces them to rely on scarce moose and forest caribou for meat.

New mechanized vehicles introduced under Soviet industrialization are fundamentally de-localized technologies. Whereas the mixed forest economy does not produce enough wealth to maintain the imported modern technologies, the professionalized or compartmentalized economy of late Soviet socialism came to rely on these modern technologies through state subsidy—a standard redistributive practice in the centralized economy of the Soviet Union. These subsidies had become an essential component in the means of production, confirming an encompassing contingency that can be read as an alienation of the means of production from the rural Evenkis. By the time communism collapsed in 1991, the Soviet system of mechanized conveyance had all but displaced traditional Evenki ways of moving on the taiga. While some Evenkis creatively manipulated the new system to their own ends, others were tyrannized by it. Ultimately, the system was entrenched in enormous networks of centralized bureaucracy. Technologies of mobility had become just as contingent on this centralization as the remote settlements that were now home to the nomads of the taiga.

In the social engineering projects of the Soviet era, women and children were socially redefined as villagers and, to a certain extent, as consumers. Men ceased to be nomads as well and went through a transformation to become semi-nomadic sedentarized shift-workers. The mobility of women and children in the taiga was generally limited to seasonally based short resource-acquisition trips. They travelled by motorboat to collect

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[37] Sea caribou is a local appellation for the migratory reindeer that spend part of the year in the tundra and the other in the taiga; they are also called *morskoe* by the Taimyr Evenkis in Khantaiskoe Ozero (Anderson 1995a).

berries and fish and sometimes by helicopter to visit relatives working in distant reindeer herding camps. Many men engaged in the land economies and only made occasional visits to town. These trips, where possible, were made with mechanized vehicles. The necessity of rapid conveyance is a concurrent development with the Soviet landscape reformations. Sedentarization and consolidation of villages was made possible through mechanized conveyance and, in turn, necessitated the mechanization of travel. Machine travel and settlements are interconnected elements in the Soviet landscape of east-central Siberia.

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[38] Murukta is reportedly the territory of the 'Turyzh' clan of Evenkis (Uvachan 1971).

5. De-mobilization and Evenkis in the post-Soviet era

In the post-Soviet era, the outcome of state violence toward the Evenki system of paths is evident in the chaotic socio-economic landscape. The very machines that were used in the campaign against Evenkis' 'backwardness', 'irrationality' and 'primitivism' in the Soviet era are now largely dysfunctional and constitute ongoing impediments to cultural renewal and local empowerment. The sedentarization of Evenki people into central villages, followed by the amalgamation of these settlements in the programs of consolidation, led to the abandonment of many taiga regions. With sedentarization and professionalization, the taiga was bureaucratically and practically sanitized of the indigenous peoples living there. The so called 'wandering' [*brodiachii*] Evenkis were given fixed homes, names, and numbers. The professionalization of reindeer herding with the associated state support, however, maintained at least some of the extensive land use practiced by pre-Soviet Evenkis. In some ways, the subsidised transport offset the growing attachments to the settlement, enabling the continued practice of travelling in a familiar landscape. With the reduction of these subsidies over the past ten years, Evenki people's ability to travel extensively on the land has equally diminished.

5.1. Travel and movement in the first decade of the post-Soviet era

The broad programme of industrialization that began in east-central Siberia in the 1960s and 1970s continued until 1991 when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics emerged from a series of political crises as the Russian Federation and the newly independent states. In the heady years following the collapse of state socialism the Russian government had made some moves in the direction of recognizing indigenous rights, addressing compounding social problems in the North, and protecting a rapidly deteriorating natural environment. These problems, however, were never adequately addressed before they were displaced, from whatever prominence they might have enjoyed in the early 1990s, by a series of profound economic crises affecting the entire Federation.[39]

In the last years of the twentieth century, the situation for residents of remote rural settlements such as Ekonda, Chirinda, Olenek, and Essei had deteriorated to such a great degree that the International Red Cross had begun to deliver emergency supplies of food and medicine. The situation for many urban Evenkis in Tura was not much better. In some instances it was significantly worse due to a crumbling welfare system and eroded networks and corridors of transport that had once facilitated travel as well as cash and commodity remittances. In addition, the general condition of economic and social crisis in the Ilimpii area has been worsened by conflict ridden district politics. The Evenki

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[39] It seems, for example, that a certain amount of indifference led to the absence of governmental support, or even representation, at the 10th anniversary celebration of RAIPON—the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (Sulyandziga 2000). Attention to indigenous rights is an ongoing struggle promoted by the Russian Federation's indigenous rights group (RAIPON). Despite ongoing economic crises they have witnessed several positive advances in federal legislation. At least one piece of legislation is documented on the RAIPON web site: "On the guarantee of rights for the Indigenous Small Numbered Peoples of the Russian Federation" Federal Law on April 30th 1999, N 82-F3. Passed by the state Duma April 16, 1999. Approved by consult of the Federation on April 22, 1999.

Autonomous District exists at an administrative level between territorial [*krai*] and federal governments. It is an awkward political structure because of conflicting obligations and overlapping administrative operations. A confusion of overlapping power structures is evident in the bitter political feuds that erupted in the autumn and winter of 1999-2000. In late summer it was reported in the local media that fuel for heating and electricity, on which Tura is entirely dependent, were not being shipped up the Yenissei and Nizhnaia Tunguska rivers. The fuel was being held back in what was popularly thought to be a contest of power between the governor of the *Krai* and the head of the administration of Evenkiia. The result of this contest was the declaration of civil emergency due to the failure of the administration to have shipments of fuel delivered from Krasnoiarsk. This crisis points again to the fragility of northern transport systems and the general insecurity of de-localization.

Transport in the taiga of east-central Siberia is undertaken within a natural environment that is often incompatible with the mechanized systems of conveyance which facilitated development and modernization in other rural areas of Russia. In particular, the shifting permafrost and bogs of the sub-Arctic have provided formidable resistance to the efforts of Soviet and post-Soviet road building engineers. While winter roads require constant maintenance and have only limited seasonal availability, year-round road travel has been an impossible goal. In east-central Siberia railways have never posed a viable option for travel. The difficulty of organizing mechanized overland conveyance in the taiga has ensured the ongoing importance of reindeer for non-subsidized travel in Evenkiia where a lone winter road connects the Ilimpii settlements.

Like the rivers throughout the Tsarist and early Soviet eras, the view from the winter road allows only the most limited understanding of the taiga landscape. Much of the Ilimpii taiga, in the post-Soviet era, is rarely visited by non-local travellers, villagers, or even hunters and herders. Local travel for some Evenkis, however, continues to reproduce traditional routes and trails which are maintained by the movement of hunters and herders on reindeer, motor boats, and snowmachines. Anderson writes that "[r]ather than interpreting an extensive land use system as the result of a vulnerability to hunger and poverty, it is better to understand Evenki movements as determined by a multiplicity of strategies" (1995a: 201). These strategies in the post-Soviet era, along with options for resistance to hegemonic practices, organizational structures, and technological systems of the colonial state, have dwindled in response to the breakdown of the redistributive corridors for capital and commodities which had formerly been organized through the centrally planned economy. The lack of opportunities for the creative manipulation of non-local resources from remote settlements in rural Siberia presents daunting and improbable grounds for local empowerment.

The following narrative account from my field work serves to illustrate one instance of travelling for Evenkis in east-central Siberia. It shows the difficulty of negotiating movement between the town and the taiga, two radically different social landscapes.

On one trip to the taiga, some Evenki friends and I travelled by boat up the Kochuchum river. We left from the co-operatively guarded docks of Tura to a site roughly fifty kilometres away. It was early autumn and Branat was returning to his small reindeer herd in the taiga. When we arrived at our destination near the mouth of a small stream, there was no one present to greet us, despite having arranged a meeting in advance. Climbing up the bank and entering the forest, we came upon a path that led into the a stand of Larch trees and fragrant bushes of Labrador Tea. Dima and Branat rested while Kostia and I followed unmarked trails to find the camp and Branat's family. The walk in was an interesting foray—Kostia had only been in the area on snowmobile three or four years earlier—but the details of a camp's location are apparently generic enough that he had little trouble finding the place. His meandering and confident saunter appears to be a common technique among Evenkis. This saunter veils a strategy of overland navigation that is as impressive as it is difficult to describe. After a couple of kilometres Kostia observed a fence marking the reindeer's late-summer enclosure [ogorodka]. Entering the camp we saw a well-established site with many amenities, including a conical summer tent, called a d'iu in Evenki. Those present were Branat's wife, their daughter and her husband and their child, as well as Vasili the junior herder. Branat's family was nearly ready to leave after a short three-week visit. It was the end of summer and the family was heading back to Tura to meet work and school obligations. Travelling from the camp to the bank of the Kochuchum, Branat's wife rode on a freight sleigh, while the daughter rode on reindeer saddle, as did Vasili, carrying the baby in his arms. We gradually made our way back to the river. When we got there we were met by Branat and Dima. Another boat showed up soon thereafter. A fire was going and tea made. One deer was slaughtered and divided up to all present, especially those who gave their boats for use.

The trip is important for this exploration of Evenki systems of mobility because Branat originally tried to negotiate the use of a helicopter for the journey. When he was unsuccessful in securing a helicopter, he tried to convince someone to take us in by overland tracked vehicle. These were both forms of transport common under the Soviet system of mechanized mobility. Ultimately, Branat had to negotiate the use of a couple of motorboats to return to his camp and have his extended family returned to the settlement. Such accommodations are becoming routine in the herder's shrinking repertoire of transport options.

Geographical and social isolation and the failure of transport networks were central problems which resulted in the disintegration of the Soviet system. To demonstrate this claim, I will explore, in the following section, the modes of transport and travel that occur on the land, on the river, and in the air, in addition to the built environments and social landscapes that contextualize Evenki people's mobility in the taiga. Each of these modes has been integral to the Soviet projects of northern industrialization and professionalization. They have also been integral to the collapse of the "spatial separation between village settlements and forest herding-hunting camps" (Kwon n.d.: 2).

More generally, these projects of socialist re-construction were integral to the displacement of the traditional system of paths and have had the effect, in the post-Soviet era, of de-mobilizing Evenkis—isolating rural settlements in east-central Siberia. Ghettos are a useful analogy in this context and have been used in reference to rural areas in the United States (Davidson 1996). The settlements of rural Ilimpii are built environments characterized by populations of de-mobilized Evenkis. It is only through an examination of travel practices that ghettoization and de-mobilization in east-central Siberia can be properly understood as failures of political-technological systems. The following section outlines my approach to an ethnography of mobility.

5.2. Centres and settlements

In this section, I deliver a sketch of the social geography for the regional centre and the settlement. Both of these sites acted as nodes within the modern Soviet system of mechanized travel. They were points which completed the vast multi-directional network of transportation corridors that connected the centres of administration and the frontiers along with myriad other elements of the Soviet built environment. The particular networks of transportation from the Soviet era must be understood as manufactured geographies of socialism that adhered to a Soviet aesthetic of travel. This aesthetic took as its central metaphor the triumph of mechanized mobility over 'backwards' or 'primitive' forms.[40] The enduring structures of Soviet transport and settlement can be clearly linked to the de-mobilization of Evenkis at the end of the twentieth century.

While state subsidies have dwindled, commitments and ties to the settlements have not. In the Soviet era, the consolidation of villages that occurred in conjunction with the introduction of mechanized travel allowed for the continued exploitation of distant taiga resources. Although the expanses of taiga were great and the villages distant from one another, the Soviet system of mechanized conveyance overcame the impediments of space. With the collapse of mechanized travel networks in east-central Siberia, Evenki hunters and herders are faced with the dilemma of balancing ties to their home villages with long forays into the taiga—necessitated by extensive herding practices that take them deep into the forest. Herders and hunters who have allegiance to their home settlements must by necessity travel great distances by reindeer to access distant sites for hunting, trapping, herding, or fishing. Their professional lives as taiga labourers, which were once supported by the Soviet system of mechanized travel, are no longer commensurate with their affinities to the village scene. This changing landscape forces hunters and herders to make difficult decisions about the distances they are willing to travel. Sedentarization and subsequent de-mobilization may have the effect of clearing the taiga of the forest economy, laying out a vacated space for competing interests to develop geological resource extraction industries. This is not to say that these would be rejected outright by those living in the village. It is not uncommon, however, to hear of hunters and herders concealing mineral deposits for fear that their land [*uchastok*] would get taken away. Given the state's history of providing industry jobs to outsiders[41] and dictating access to the taiga, it is unlikely that many Evenkis support industrial development. There is also a good deal of criticism of the ecological devastation surrounding mining operations, military testing sites, and other industry that threatens the local forest economy.

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[40] See Bantjes (2000) for an analogy from the Canadian prairies.

The everyday operation of cities in the Russian Arctic and sub-Arctic is entirely dependent on the yearly delivery of fuel from the south.

> Since the beginning of the 90s the situation in the providing of the [Evenkiia] region with technical products, fuel, food and consumer goods becomes critical regularly. The main reasons are of organizational and financial character. [Davydovich n.d.: 14]

The fuel is transported along the river routes which are only open during short, seasonal windows. The importance of these deliveries cannot be stressed enough. As noted above, the 6,000 to 8,000 people living in Tura would have to be evacuated in the event that supplies of fuel were not delivered. The precariously built infrastructure of northern cities is de-localized in the same manner as the mechanized vehicles imported in the Soviet era. While the Tura emergency, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, was deferred through federal aid, the reality of the district's lack of independence continues to haunt Evenkiia and, without a doubt, plays a part in local electoral politics. The problem of provisioning enormous northern infrastructures is that they are essentially built upon foundations of de-localized technologies and they can function only as long as the system of subsidy continues to provide for them.

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[41] In the feature film *Moi drug Temanchi* (My friend Temanchi), which was filmed in the settlement Nidym, EOA, professions are clearly reified, with Evenkis having little to do with mineral exploitation and exploration. In this movie, and consistent with accounts from elders and

The 1999-2000 fuel crisis marked a new low for Tura residents in the rationing of electricity and the late delivery of heat to the centrally heated apartment blocks. It was not until mid-October that hot water was delivered to the centrally heated apartment buildings which house the majority of the population in the capital. While many apartments have wood stoves in the kitchens, they suffer from a critical inefficiency and are generally far from adequate in the provision of heating needs. Most people felt the very chilly effects of a Siberian autumn and were thankful that the temperature was warmer than usual for that time of year, rarely dropping far below zero. In early November, near the time of our departure, electricity continued to be rationed and was generally only offered for a couple hours in the morning and evening: barely enough time to cook food and boil tea on the electric stove.

The urban design of Tura, in contrast to that of the outlying settlements, is such that the majority of homes are totally reliant on centralized heating and electricity. In 1995, when I was in Olenek, a regional centre comparable in many ways to Tura, my hosts had recently built a home that was as reliant on centralized heating as the Soviet-era apartments. While fuel shortages in Olenek were not as serious as the 1999 Evenkiia shortages, there was ample reason for the residents to be concerned about the future ability of the administration to provide adequate heat and electricity. Before the middle of December there had been at least two days when the heating plant was unable to

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older hunters, Evenkis were employed in 'traditional' economies while the *priezzhie* were brought provide the homes with hot water for heating. Four years later, in Tura, some Russians who owned newly built private homes remarked that the independence assured by wood heat was one of the reasons for their investment. It should be noted, however, that Evenkis living in the regional centre of Tura, either permanently or otherwise, suffer from a greater degree of impoverishment than their Slavic neighbours, and rarely have the financial means to build independent 'cottages'. With a lack of adequate housing, many Evenkis are forced to live in overcrowded, unsanitary, and, generally, unfavourable conditions.

It is perhaps the settlement though, and not the regional centre, that is the central symbol of the enduring Soviet landscape in Siberia. Precariously suspended in webs of state support and subsidy, the settlement, like mechanized vehicles and the regional centres, is an essentially de-localized technological system suffering from a near total contingency on distant systems of production and distribution. It is dysfunctional because, in constructing sedentism, the state's assault on nomadism hobbled local independence through its totalizing approach to the centralized administration of nearly all aspects of life. In sedentarizing Evenkis, whole new sets of social relations were both encouraged and enforced. While all mechanical forms of travel are implicitly tied to the settlement through an umbilical-like contingency, localized forms of travel are bound to the settlement through the state's enforced residential patterns as well as an affinity for the promise of village life and its (now deteriorating) amenities.

A fuel shortage in Tura is much more dire than it would be in remote villages, which are architecturally less dependent on centralized heating facilities. The original dwellings in settlements like Ekonda and Chirinda are essentially single-family cottages with small yards. Ekonda is built on straight gridlines with the school, day-care, store, and

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in from afar to work in 'modern' industries like mining.

administration buildings set around a central field. The aerodrome is set slightly above the village site, which is on the bank of the Upper Viliui river. Newer buildings are either single-unit homes or duplexes. All houses in Ekonda have large, centrally located wood-burning stoves that produce enough heat for the entire home. While Ekonda has an electrical power station to provision the cottages with light, electricity for small appliances, and sometimes electrical heat, the villagers do not rely on the settlement to provide dependable electricity.[42]

Ekonda's administration, state farm [*sovkhoz*], and store, owned by the Fish-Coop [*rybkoop*],[43] are the only local institutions that are able to organize mechanized transportation from the regional centre. Significantly, the Fish co-op administration is located in Tura, with only a handful of employees in Ekonda. The key decision-makers in the *sovkhoz* are also often not to be found in the remote settlement, but rather the regional centre. On more than one occasion I encountered the head of the Ekonda *sovkhoz* in Tura. Tura is arguably a better place for the *sovkhoz* head to promote Ekonda's needs to the district administration. In relation to the *sovkhoz*, the local administration is even weaker in its ability to negotiate mobility; it seems the mayor of Ekonda has little social power or financial capacity to organize air travel.

Localized travel schemes are perhaps best understood in the context of the seasons. Summer is the part of the current seasonal round when women, elders, and children from the settlements reunite with the herds and herders who have been engaged in the forest over the long winter months. This season has emerged as a tremendously important time for the reproduction of traditional forest dwelling skills as well as food acquisition. The reunification of families on the land provides an opportunity to pass on forest skills and language skills, and other forms of knowledge connected to Evenki culture and the Evenki system of paths in general. As a social occasion, being on the land provides a generally affirming space were the hunters and herders are skilled masters. The significance of this season is seen in the ethnographic film series: "Taiga Nomads" (Aaltonen and Lappalainen 1990; 1992) and is noted in Fondahl's work on the Zabaikal Evenkis (1998: 70). In the period of high socialism, the seasonal round that developed in the time after sedentarization and through the introduction of industrialization was turned on its head. While the Evenkis' system of paths prior to sedentarization could be characterized as "life in the forest with occasional forays into the settlement or outpost", post-Soviet mobility for women and children is inversely marked as "life in the settlement with occasional forays into the taiga".

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[42] Ironically, while people in Tura were living under the shadow of imminent evacuation, those living in Ekonda were enjoying regular (though rationed) flows of electrical power. The administration was set to re-order the settlements' fuel supply in 2001.

[43] The Rybkoop is now reported to be bankrupt (pers. Comm. Anderson). What this means for local branch operations is not clear but is surely not a good sign for the already cash poor Ekonda outfit. It is my understanding that the Rybkoop and the regional government had established an agreement to maintain the facilities in the villages.

The de-mobilization of Evenkis is not only a story of being stranded in settlements but also in regional centres, and cities. While in Tura, I made several trips to Krasnoiarsk, the territorial capital. In one of my autumn journeys to Krasnoiarsk, the brother of an acquaintance from the Tura Medical College came to my hotel room. I was surprised to meet a man I had encountered only once in passing. I learned that he was a hunter on his way back to Evenkiia after having been in Krasnoiarsk for a few weeks. After some talk, breakfast, and a walk through town, he told me of his plight: he did not have the money to return to Evenkiia and was sure to miss the all-important autumn hunting season. Ultimately, he wanted to borrow money to buy a ticket, which he promised to pay back (and did, by way of his sister, before I left Evenkiia).

On another occasion, a reindeer herder from Ekonda was in Tura to see one of his daughters off to a training college in Yakutiia.[44] The family was renting a small apartment with no fridge, an extremely small stove, and only one room. They had no furnishings and few cooking utensils. A single-burner electric hotplate on the floor of the kitchen was only as useful as the irregular availability of electricity flowing from centralized diesel-powered generators. With little cash, their diet was poor and they relied heavily on remittances of fish from Tura. The herder spent much of his time waiting for meetings with officials and trying to secure passage for his younger daughter to leave in time for college in Yakutiia where she had received a scholarship to study. As with the hunter in Krasnoiarsk, this herder was anxious to return to the taiga in time for the important autumn hunt of wild caribou.

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[44] His oldest daughter was also in town—as Ekonda's nurse-practitioner she was invited to travel to Canada as a trainee for a Canadian international aid project focussing on health in Eastern Siberia.

The reluctance of Evenkis to leave their impoverished homes to search for better opportunities in other areas of Russia is not surprising given the uncertainty of life away from kinship connections. With no safety-net and extremely limited means to travel the great distances of Siberia, Evenkis now take few journeys beyond the district even if they have the immediate means to do so. Evenkis in both settlements and regional centres suffer similarly precarious options for mobility. In the instance that one can afford or engineer long-distance travel there are few guarantees of support at one's destination and even fewer guarantees for return passage. Documenting travel between the settlements, the regional centres, and other densely populated places is only one route to an understanding of Evenki people's current predicament. Settlements and centres are technological systems that provide the framework for the Soviet system of mechanized travel. To further explore this system I now present my study of mobility in the taiga, on the rivers, and in the air in the post-Soviet era.

5.3. Taiga mobility

The geographical variation, from hummocky swamps and tundras to thickly forested stands of taiga, which was a formidable obstacle to Russian and Soviet efforts at overland travel, is skillfully accommodated in the Evenki system of paths through reindeer conveyance. European horses, though they were useful elsewhere in Siberia (North 1978), were incapable of navigating the taiga landscape. Sakha horses, which are better adapted to Siberia's cold than those from Europe, do not figure prominently in the literature. Maladapted to the Arctic weather European horses were singularly unable to transport people, goods, and even themselves through the bogs of the taiga and tundra. The only other options for Russian and early Soviet overland travel were foot and reindeer, the latter being available only through payment or coercion.

In later years, with the advent of mechanized travel, the Russians set about building roads through the taiga, attempting to implement a cohesive network of transport. Rivers remained the primary means of conveyance however, with roads providing invaluable inter-modal connections in places where there were no navigable rivers. North of the Lower Tunguska, at least, roads are totally contingent on several weeks of freezing weather. Depending on the weight of the vehicle, the taiga becomes navigable by winter road for four to six months of the year.

> [M]otor transport is determined by the absence of the constant road network. In the winter there are provisional roads <<Zimniki>>. Their total length is 7,640 kilometres. They link populated points, the stops of fishermen, hunters, reindeer breeders, and geologists. [Davydovich n.d.: 14]

After several weeks of intense cold, the rivers can also be considered part of the overland travel complex. In the winter time they play a major role in the travel complex of both reindeer sleighs and motorized vehicles, in effect expanding the total length of winter roads. In 1995, when I travelled with a hunting brigade in Olenek, all wild caribou killed in the hunt were brought to a central line of transport. The deer were bled and skinned; their heads left on, the carcasses draped with the hide. When there were enough carcasses to justify an expensive road trip into the taiga, a large freight truck was called for. As the truck drove along the road it would stop at the various cashes of meat and one person would take an axe and chop the heads off the frozen carcasses while the others would load them onto the truck. This was the typical autumn hunt for migratory caribou.

The winter roads that bisect the taiga require constant maintenance in order to provide navigable routes for the wheeled vehicles that deliver goods to remote villages. According to one Evenki man, many of these routes were superimposed atop traditional paths and trails. Evenkis travelling on foot or with reindeer use winter roads in their own travels, taking advantage of cleared routes through the taiga for easy walking, riding, and sleigh driving. The winter roads are also used by private entrepreneurs who haul fuel, machine parts, basic foodstuffs, vodka, and other commodities to exchange for pelts, meat, and fish. Their business is lucrative and, like their predecessors in the pre-communist eras, they are accused of exploiting Evenkis to make great profits. The winter roads, however, are only able to support traffic in narrow seasonal openings which are dependent on specific conditions of freezing.[45]

The relationship of the Evenki system of paths to the colonial landscapes of settlements and transport corridors is one that requires some attention. With reference to the early Soviet period, Anderson writes:

> The effect of special administrative attention for native peoples in Taimyr was a dramatic improvement in education, health care, and the supply of trade goods within relatively restricted 'orbits' around administrative posts exclusively authorized to provision schooling, medicine, and ammunition (and eventually transport)... [Anderson 2000a: 228]

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[45] In the late winter of 1999, a convoy of trucks returning from Essei lost its load of wild reindeer carcasses when the vehicles became stuck in the thawing taiga. In late summer some of these trucks could be seen coming into town aboard barges.

Following early Soviet accounts, Ssorin-Chaikov describes Evenki peoples as gravitating towards trade fairs, 'ethnic celebrations', settlements, and meetings (1998: 100, 124). 'Gravitating' and 'orbiting' can also be used to describe the trails of Evenkis prior to Soviet industrialization. Reindeer herding at the time of high socialism was characterized by mechanized transit between sites of production (the taiga) and sites of consumption (the settlement). Yet even within the state's highly circumscribed reindeer industry there was some opportunity to reproduce aspects of the traditional system of paths. In other words, the Evenki practices of mobility were not completely subsumed under the Soviet system of mechanized travel.

In his study of Orochon herding at the end of the Soviet era, Kwon (1993) characterizes nomadic travel:

> A migration journey is of course a physical transfer of homestead from Place X to Place Y, but while the transfer is being made, neither place is duku, the home of the present. A migration journey is in fact a liminal period of homelessness. The liminality here does not lie between two homesteads but two 'homes of the present'. During this liminal period, both x and y become and remain 'homes of the past', just like the numerous duyal. The landscape is then devoid of the centrality of the duku but only meaningful in terms of directions and ground-objects. [75-6]

Is the trail between two points best characterized as homelessness? While this may be the case for the Orochon of Sakhalin Island, it is common to hear Evenkis state that their home is the taiga which suggests that a 'migration journey' is more comparable to moving from room to room in one's own home than it is to actually moving to an entirely different home. In response to questions of birthplace, many Ilimpii elders who were not born in settlements simply respond: '*v lesu*' (in the forest) and not '*v d'iue*' (in the tent). Kwon goes on to theorize that "Duku is where and when the two spheres [time and space] of action meet in ongoing dialectics. From this perspective, it is not satisfactory to define nomadism as a type of life characterized by moving resource extraction" (Kwon 1993: 76). A more appropriate definition of nomadism comes from the ongoing practice of dwelling in the taiga. If in the Orochon's transhumant experience they interpret home as existing in both time and space, similarities can be drawn to the Ilimpii Evenkis' herding practices.

Evenki herders typically state that they must never camp in the same spot twice. Anderson, noting a similar point made by Vasilevich,[46] remarked on this in his work with the Evenki people of the Taimyr: "although the contemporary motions of the Number One [reindeer herding] Brigade are contained within administrative boundaries, it is considered a 'sin' to set camp on the same spot or to use the exact same trail" (1995a: 189). Ilimpii Evenki herders seem to be ambiguous about the degree to which they follow this practice. When I stayed with Vasili Branat and his 'brigade'[47] in their mid-summer camp I noticed the remains of last year's camp about a hundred metres away. Nonetheless, when Branat had moved the herd to his fenced pasture [*ogorodka*] at the end of summer there were clear indications that they maintained a regular site. While there was no cabin, there were a number of well-built stashes [*labazy*] and other conveniences of camp life. In an article written at the end of the Soviet era, the anthropologist Anna Sirina notes that the Evenkis north of Lake Baikal plan routes of travel and sites for camping according to customs that pre-date Soviet industrial herding strategies (1992: 82). Furthermore, she notes the ongoing importance of the spatial-architectural layout of the Evenki camp which reflects social values and worldviews (ibid.). My own observations, along with Sirina's account, accentuate the continuities in practices.

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[46] According to Vasilevich (1972: 166): "The wandering [Evenki] hunters are different from nomadic peoples in that they always travel upon new places: '[one should not] travel twice on the same road."

[47] The Russian term *brigada* was introduced under the Soviet-era industrialization of reindeer herding. *Brigada* and *Brigadir* continue to be used colloquially by some reindeer herders in reference to their own privatized herds.

It seems that reindeer herding strategies vary greatly, though general patterns of movement are dictated by a negotiation of herd size and pasture quality. A smaller herd has a lesser requirement to be constantly moved than a larger one. In the summer time, two reindeer herds which I visited were located nearer to the settlements than at other times of the year. Not all herders, however, brought their reindeer close to Ekonda when I was visiting in the summer and autumn. There was at least one herding family—notably referred to as the richest [*bai*]—which was located near the border of Yakutiia over three hundred kilometres to the Northeast on the Olenek river. Having one's herd near the settlement may occur because of travel limitations in the summer time but could also have to do with proximity to family who live in the settlement. Because sleighs are far more efficient than saddles for long-distance travel, it is often preferable to use distant grazing pastures in the winter. At the end of autumn, when the snow was freshly on the ground and the rivers nearly frozen over, one herder I knew was moving his reindeer far to the south of Ekonda, near the banks of the Lower Tunguska. Another herd, located near Tura, migrated in a circular pattern and was heading north along the Kochuchum as the autumn drew to a close. These herders may have been heading further away from the regional centre to avoid the numerous non-Evenki recreational hunters who gain overland mobility when the taiga freezes enough to run their snowmobiles. Inevitably, reindeer herders maintain flexibility in their migration schedules and interact with a complex and changing environment of human and non-human actors.

5.3.1. Reindeer

> In the taiga, reindeer herding has more importance for transport [than on the tundra]. Reindeer are needed primarily for moving from one station to another and for hunting over wide spaces. One might say that in the taiga there are no reindeer herders but that there are hunters with reindeer. [Pika 1999: 92]

If reindeer travel by the end of the Soviet era was in service of chaotic and aggressive management (Anderson 2000b), no generalizable norm has become evident in the post-Soviet era. The professionalization of reindeer herding under Soviet industrialization created a practical rift between those working on the taiga and those living in town. To a large extent that rift still exists, the only people having access to reindeer transport being reindeer herders. Access to reindeer and ownership of reindeer, however, are not the same thing. Vasilevich and Smolyak note, for example, the common practice of lending and gifting reindeer between wealthier and poorer Evenkis (1964: 646). In August 1999, I met a man who was trying to get an internal passport photograph so that he could buy ammunition to hunt. When I asked him if he had a snowmachine, he said no but that he would try to borrow a team of reindeer. The issue of reindeer ownership is complex and must precede any discussion of use. For the purposes of this paper, suffice to say that most villagers have no access to reindeer mobility except in so far as they might occasionally find themselves guests of reindeer herders—though this seems to be a rare situation. Social gatherings of villagers and reindeer herders tend to take place in the settlement, rather than the taiga.

Reindeer conveyance can be divided into two distinct sub-groups: the saddle and the sleigh. Vasilevich and Levin report that both saddle and sleigh were used by "Saami, separate groups of Evenks, Evens, Iukagirs, and Iakuts, Dolgans, Negidals, and Oroks" (1951: 64). On the occasions that I visited east-central Siberia, Evenki and Sakha reindeer herders made use of both reindeer saddle and sleigh. While the saddle and the sleigh are the physically manufactured implements of reindeer conveyance, it is the reindeer themselves that must first be considered.

Mounted reindeer mobility is highly seasonal and dependent on both geographical and climatic conditions. Most generally, reindeer are ridden only when there is no snow on the ground. Many pre-Soviet and Soviet scholars were impressed by the performance of domesticated reindeer, even if economists and biologists were unimpressed with Evenki practices of herding.

> The reindeer is of incomparable use in the *taiga*. It serves for riding, and for carrying loads. Its step is smooth and very easy, without any rough movements; hence they do not tire the rider. It is so swift, and so adapted to the taiga that with a good reindeer one may travel over fifty miles a day, while under the same conditions the horse cannot do more than thirty-five miles. As stated, the reindeer passes without any difficulty through marshy places, and also between shrubs, broken rocks, and fallen trees; it very rarely falls down. [Shirokogoroff 1929: 30]

All of the Evenki herders whom I met reported that reindeer are able to carry the equivalent of half of their own weight on their backs. In the summer time, the fastest method of localized overland travel is on reindeer saddle. For long journeys and arduous terrain, though, I have seen Evenkis dismount and walk for several kilometres at a time in order to give the reindeer an opportunity to rest.

On one occasion, after a spending a weekend with Vasili Branat's herd, my friends and I packed up for a return to Tura. Our camp was located roughly thirty kilometres from town. Nevolin, an apprentice herder temporarily working for Branat, was chosen to escort us back. My companions and I were each given a saddle-mounted reindeer to speed up our return trip. We spent the entire day picking our way through the taiga on a convoluted path to town, sometimes travelling along the roads cut for winter use and sometimes blazing our own route. Nevolin brought us much closer to Tura than he had agreed to but we still had about fifteen kilometres to walk back to our homes.

To my knowledge, Vasili Branat , who keeps forty-nine reindeer in the old territory of the Tura hunters' club, has never brought his herd into the regional centre. This is not surprising given the often poor level of cross-cultural understanding between Evenkis and *priezhie* (new-comers) Because of its dominant population of non-Evenkis, Tura would be far too unpredictable for reindeer. There are simply too many people who don't understand reindeer to risk bringing them into close proximity. The herder would risk injury or loss of reindeer due to feral and domestic dogs, poaching from Tura hunters, as well as broken glass and other imperilling debris.

The sleigh, in contrast to the saddle, is used year-round—though it has a limited use in the summer when the carrying capacity is greatly reduced in relation to obstructions and increased friction. Vasilevich and Levin (1951) break down the types of sleigh into travel [*ezdovye*] and freight [*gruzovye*]. Travelling sleighs are further divided into types of runner: 'arched', 'straight', and 'slanted'. The Ilimpii Evenkis, as well as reindeer herders in Olenek, employ the slanted runner [*kosokryl'noi*] travel sleigh. The travel sleighs built by Ilimpii Evenkis typically fall into two categories: women's and men's sleighs. This is evident in my own field work as well as images that I have studied from museum collections, private photo albums, and films.

Sleighs are pulled by a number of harnessed deer. Vasilevich and Levin (1951) write that teams of two reindeer are most common among the Evenki, but that the number of deer harnessed to both travel and freight sleighs range between one and seven (1951: 66). When travelling with Vasili Branat's family in late autumn (before the snowfall), two deer were used to pull the a cargo sleigh several kilometres through the taiga. An elderly Evenki woman rode on the sleigh for much of the journey. Later that year, after several weeks of snow, reindeer were brought into the town-site of Ekonda. The children had not yet left for the residential school in Tura and there was considerable excitement as the reindeer herders took groups on tours of the settlement. On the return journey to the taiga, the deer were again harnessed in pairs.

The relations between herders and the working deer are one site for the reproduction of traditional Evenki thought and practice. The industrialization of the reindeer herding economy in the Soviet era broadly restructured the population profiles of traditional Evenki herds. Even under the conditions of Soviet industrialization and the introduction of snowmachines, reindeer provided the bulk of the transport needs for herders in the taiga. The persistence of extensive travel through reindeer-motivated conveyance opened a space for the continuity of relations between reindeer herders and certain reindeer. Soviet production herding re-invented reindeer herding as a northern industrialized extension of the state's massive agricultural projects. There remained, however, space in the day-to-day practice of herding to perpetuate some traditional Evenki-reindeer relations. From his work with Orochon herders on Sakhalin island, Kwon (1993) notes this point of cultural continuity and refers to the reindeer as 'work reindeer' [*rabochii*]. An analogy can be reasonably extended from Kwon's case for tracing the continuity of Orchon reindeer herding techniques through these *rabochii* deer. He writes that

> despite the drastic change in socio-economic form during the last sixty years, the work reindeer continue to play a significant role. As a means of conveyance, the work reindeer have been consistently one of the most important technologies in the nomadic life of the Orochon. [Kwon 1993: 79]

In the Taimyr, Anderson has also noted the existence of a separate tier of animals in the ranks of Soviet production herds. He writes of

> a special partnership between the *tundrovik* [skilled herder, lit. tundra-person] and a special set of reindeer which gives a person the ability to travel widely and securely to take advantage of either the wild animals offered by the tundra for hunting, or opportunities offered by the farm for remuneration. These specially trained reindeer are typically seen as belonging to a specific herder. [Anderson 2000b: 30]

The success of the reindeer brigade with which Anderson apprenticed is linked to the maintenance of a herd sporting a proportionally large male population, as compared to the norm of Soviet production ranching which emphasized cows over bucks. When deer were raised as a means to facilitate other land-based pursuits, rather than raised as meat, the herds were composed of a proportionally larger group of males. Production herding, on the other hand, is geared towards high yields of meat. It follows, then, that these privately owned deer, as opposed to the female deer raised for meat production, exhibit some continuities of traditional Evenki practices. The rise in the proportion of female to male reindeer in Soviet production herding did not lead to the general removal of bucks, as it did in the Nordic countries where snowmobiles generally replaced reindeer for travel purposes (Pelto 1973). Until the late 1960s, male working deer remained important in the provision of transport for the herding operations as well as all other overland travel. After the 1960s, even through the most intense periods of Soviet economic reorganization, working deer continued to be used by professional reindeer herders. The *rabochii* deer might not only be a site for the reproduction of Evenki knowledge, but a more complex co-mixture which includes the modern 'scientific' knowledge emanating from schools for biology, resource management, and agriculture.

In the past few years, during the post-Soviet era, many herds have been privatized and have been dramatically reduced in size. The smaller herd size, consequently, more closely resembles the pre-industrial, pre-collectivized herds. Following the collapse of trans-local networks of commodity exchange and other infrastructures of state socialism, many herders appear to have shifted their focus away from Soviet-style herding. Now they are breeding deer to meet transport needs in hunting rather that raising herds for meat production. This return is at least partly conditioned by the failure of de-localized vehicles to provide mobility but also suggests continuities of pre-industrial Evenki herding practices. These practices are characterized by small-sized herds with a greater proportion of bulls to does. This shift demonstrates that the practice of hunting has gained precedence over herding for the production of meat or dairy products. Such a return to hunting as the primary economy is compatible with both Pika's (1999) and Anderson's (1995a) positions that the Evenki can be characterized as hunters who rely on reindeer to facilitate taiga mobility.

In this post-Soviet era, it appears that some herders are attempting to maintain features of the Soviet system of herding while others are creatively re-producing and re-interpreting older Evenki systems and are quick to abandon Soviet-style management. In any event, the collapse of the Soviet system has made it difficult to maintain many of the central aspects of herding. The Soviet system of mechanized conveyance that linked the products of industrial reindeer herding to distant locales through subsidized helicopters, tracked vehicles, trucks, and snowmobiles is in many respects practically defunct. For hunters and herders in Ekonda, the most accessible and reliable form of transport is reindeer saddle and sleigh. For those hunters without reindeer, the land has become inaccessible. They have become de-mobilized through a combination of an affinity to their home settlements and the collapse of the Soviet system of mechanized transport. While I have shown that reindeer conveyance persists in the Taiga, it is also bound to and limited by the centrality of settlements in the official organization of daily life. The consolidated village, as an artifact of Soviet modernity, confounds reindeer mobility and acts as a resting place for rapidly degenerating machines.[48]

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[48] In a very different out-of-the-way place Kathleen Stewart describes a very similar landscape: "These hills—at once occupied, encompassed, exploited, betrayed, and deserted—become a place where the effects of capitalism and modernization pile up on the landscape as the detritus of history, and where the story of 'America' grows dense and unforgettable in re-membered ruins and pieced-together fragments" (1996: 4).

5.3.2. Snowmobiles

> **The 'snowmobile revolution' in Lapland is characterized by its unplanned, micro-technological aspect brought about by individual decision making and adoption. [Muller-Wille 1975: 122]**

In the late 1950s, a functional and mass-produced predecessor of the modern snowmobile [*snegokhod*] was produced in northern Quebec by Bombardier (Smith 1972: 2). It was not long before the snowmobile appeared in other northern areas throughout the world. Saami pastoralists were perhaps the first users of snowmobiles to receive the attention of ethnographers studying culture change in Finland, Norway, and Sweden (Pelto 1973, 1975; Muller-Wille 1975). The arrival of snowmachines in the European North resulted in a rapid displacement of reindeer conveyance and a general alteration in the fundamental approach to herding reindeer. The rise of the snowmobile in Sapmi[49] must have been especially interesting to these social scientists, as it appeared to run parallel to the displacement of the horse and cart by the automobile several decades earlier.

The arrival of the snowmobile in east-central Siberia has a much different history than other sub-Arctic and Arctic places. In Olenek and Ekonda, the use of snowmobiles by Evenkis has generally been limited to employees of local state farms [*sovkhoz*] as hunters and trappers. Where the reindeer herders of the Nordic countries, and possibly those of the Siberian tundra, used snowmobiles extensively in their herding practice, the reindeer herders of the taiga employed mainly reindeer for local ground travel. In the North American boreal forests as well as on the Arctic tundra, snowmobiles are used for long distance hunting trips (Hall 1971). In both Olenek and Ekonda, snowmobiles have been used similarly, although access to a shrinking number of operational snowmobiles is becoming more and more limited.

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[49] **Saami name for what is sometimes called Lapland or Saamiland.**

Like all de-localized machines, snowmobiles are reliant on networks of supply that are external to the user community. This means that the snowmobiles themselves are imported as well as the tools, parts, oil, and gas that is necessary to keep them running. Their contingency on such networks has resulted in a severe reduction in the number of functioning machines, the frequency they are used, and the distance people are willing or able to travel on them. A related outcome is the growing problem of accessing the diminishing number of functional snowmobiles. As with motorboats and other mechanized vehicles, gaining access to snowmobiles requires an expenditure of social capital. A limited number of operational vehicles and an increasing demand for mobility results in considerable pressure to lend out one's snowmobile, and because of an ongoing condition of shortage not only of fuel but of parts as well, these costly vehicles are not loaned out indiscriminately. In both Ekonda and Olenek, snowmobiles are used primarily by hunters and *sovkhoz* workers. While snowmobiles are commonly used in the settlements for a variety of tasks, hunters have had the primary claim to their use. In the Soviet era, according to Anderson, snowmobiles were bought by the state farm and leased out to hunters who were, in turn, obliged to work a number of scheduled hours.[50] Unlike the helicopter, where the power accorded those in a position of authority is typically invested with Russians and other *priezzhii*, the consolidation of power and capital through the ownership and control of snowmobiles and motorboats is open to Evenkis as well.

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[50] David G. Anderson, personal communication. There is not always a clear distinction when a hunter is working for the state farm and when he is working for himself. This ambiguity also flows into the general functioning of the settlement. The state farm and state farm employees are often concerned not only with the operations of their own organization, but of the settlement as well. When work is done in the village it is not always clear who is doing it or why. A confounding phenomenon, not only to the ethnographer, but to many villagers, making the determination of responsibility a frequent point of dissension.

With many state farms either disbanded or on the cusp of bankruptcy, the system is clearly in a state of flux. Ambiguities about access and ownership abound. Nonetheless, during my 1999 field season in Ekonda, where the state farm is still operational, it was clear that gaining access to these vehicles is a function of both employment and influence. This journal entry from 1995 provides additional support for my description of the use of snowmobiles in east-central Siberia.

> While in Olenek I had the opportunity to go hunting with a group of hunters who were hunting both for the sovkhoz and for themselves. I travelled to the camp during a late-autumn school break, accompanying the mother of one of the hunters as well as his three-year-old son. We travelled on a winter road aboard a large two-axle Ural, one of the giant trucks generously distributed throughout the Soviet North. The Ural had been brought to haul the carcasses of recently hunted wild, migrating caribou back to the settlement. The camp was already established and there were two snowmachines as well as several drums of fuel. A week earlier the hunters had travelled out to the camp (a three-or-four hour journey) on snowmobile, towing the 45-gallon drums of fuel behind them on aluminum sleighs. From the base camp, the hunters made forays into the taiga after the migrating *morskoe* caribou. The two primary methods of hunting included finding a path in the snow—well worn by the passing of hundreds of deer—and waiting. The other method was to travel on the snowmobile, following established winter roads, looking for fresh caribou tracks. When these tracks were located the hunter would determine how many deer had passed and how long ago the crossing had occurred. Weighing the chances of catching the deer, the hunter would then begin tracking the animals aboard the snowmobile until sited and shot. The deer would then be brought back to the main trail, using straight-runner metal sleighs. This is production hunting, using all the resources of the *sovkhoz*. If the catch of deer was significant and the locale distant, a helicopter might be commandeered to transport the deer back to the village. On the trip that I took, the truck was driven on the road, carcasses being picked up as it went along.

This description from 1995 portrays a highly mechanized hunting operation. The situation in Ekonda in 1999 differed in that the sovkhoz lacked the resources for such heavily mechanized operations. The limited number of machines in Ekonda has added to a situation of impoverishment and malnutrition.

The problems of inaccessibility or the inability to negotiate the use of transport are found in the story of a botched moose hunt. An Evenki hunter named Red and his hunting partner shot a moose several kilometres outside of Ekonda. They returned with a little meat on their backs and planned to borrow a snowmachine to claim the rest of the carcass. On their return to the settlement, however, they were unable to negotiate the use of a snowmobile. Eventually, they were forced to return to the site of the kill, on foot, with some friends and a hand pulled sleigh. Unfortunately, when they got there, due to a poorly constructed *labaz* (a raised storage cash) the meat had been eaten by wolves or village dogs. Their loss points to a problem unique to settlement dwellers [*poselskovye*] whose access to the means of transport is highly limited.

The lost meat is also an illustration of a shift in skills associated with educational priorities and the spatial relations of the Soviet landscape. As noted above, herders prefer not to bring their reindeer into the settlement. The work of taxiing people back and forth between the nomadic camp and the village is done, when possible, with the aid of snowmachines in the winter and motorboats in the summertime. Even those *poselskovye* with the social capital to arrange for reindeer transport suffer from a lack of accessible reindeer when they are needed. When Red needed to haul his moose carcass from the taiga he was unable to gather the social capital necessary to secure the use of either snowmobile or reindeer transport. As the scarcity of imported commodities increases, so too does the value of vehicles like motorboats and snowmachines.

The point about villagers lacking access to reindeer supports my position on contingency and the settlement. If the settlement is antithetical to the camp site [*stoianka*], then it is also antithetical to the localized nature of reindeer technology. Villagers' reliance on mechanized technology places them in a precarious dependency. The above story about the lost moose meat is important because it occurred at a time when meat was scarce (as it almost always is in Ekonda). After a long summer when fish, fowl, and berries are the mainstay of the wild-crafted contribution to the diet, everybody craves meat. Red's inability to negotiate the use of a snowmobile to collect his moose meat is part of a larger narrative of the now-dysfunctional Soviet landscape—the fragility of technological systems in the Arctic, and the incommensurability of taiga and settlement life.

This story also points to the loss of knowledge when children grow up without fully experiencing life in the taiga. Had Red known how to build a good *labaz,* the meat might not have been lost. Ultimately, the hunter from the village who is not part of the *sovkhoz* is dislocated from the means of transport. However, even *sovkhoz* workers have limited access to mechanized mobility. Unable to negotiate the snowmobile, he has no alternative but his own two feet (or skis). While hunting on foot is not impossible, it takes different skills to bring home the kill. These skills are gained on the land and not at the residential school in Tura. The loss of experience marks a growing disjuncture between Evenkis who live in settlements and those Evenkis who spend greater amounts of time on the land, regardless of snowmobiles or reindeer.

5.4. River mobility

The history of river travel in Siberia is long and most strongly associated with Russian and Soviet routes. In the post-Soviet era, however, motorboats are emerging as one of the only forms of mechanized transport available to remotely located Evenkis. They provide a course for passage between the settlement and the taiga and have become an important aspect of the post-Soviet mobility regimes of Evenkis. Unlike the helicopter and overland transport, such as the Ural truck and the tracked vehicle, the motorboat is relatively inexpensive to acquire, maintain, and operate.

Prior to the arrival of Russian invaders, explorers, and traders, it appears that Evenki people in the central Siberian plateau used canoes only for short trips. I come to this conclusion only on the absence of material suggesting otherwise, as well as an extrapolation from current river travel practices. Apparently, in the early twentieth century, the "Reindeer Tungus of Manchuria use[d] birch bark canoes only for hunting, crossing rivers and when they go to visit the banks of the Argun and the Amur rivers. . ." (Shirokogoroff 1935: 88). The canoes seen in Ekonda today are called *diav*, in the singular (*Diavil*, pl.). *Diavil* that are used in settlements throughout Ilimpii are relied upon for short-distance river travel. As a shuttle to move people across a river or lake to gain access to good berry picking grounds, *diavil* are an ideal vehicle for two or three people. Most commonly, I have seen it used to travel along the river to the site of a fisher's nets, which were typically examined twice a day. The *diav* is a local adaptation of the birch-bark canoe, variations of which were once used widely throughout the taiga. "The Tungus canoe made of birch bark is one of the remarkable inventions of the populations living in the regions rich in birch bark" (Shirokogoroff 1935: 88).

In my travels thus far I have yet to encounter the traditional birch bark vessel; the only *diavil* made from birch bark seem to be in museums. The design of the contemporary *diavil* has incorporated plywood, nails, and screws in its construction. Sometimes these boats are also painted, usually with house paint. While canoes in North America are sometimes motorized, I have never seen Evenki *diavil* used in conjunction with a motor. I made some inquiry into the possibility of finding someone who knew how to manufacture a *diav* made of birch bark. My friends were surprised by this and either suggested that no one knew how to do this or that, perhaps, there was one old man with the knowledge. I never pursued the question but there are apparently none in use today. The knowledge of making paddles is still maintained, though. The paddle, which is about six to eight feet long, has a paddle head on either end. It is carved from tamarack and looks similar to the paddles used by Aleutian Eskimos. The significant difference in construction from many other paddles with blades at both ends is that the blades are parallel to one another rather than perpendicular. In this respect, the paddle is not twisted for each stroke but, rather, steadily maintained. The design of the perpendicular blades is typically explained as a method of reducing wind resistance; while one blade is in the water, propelling the boat, the other is cutting through the air with the least amount of surface area. If the use of *diavil* in Ilimpii is primarily for small crossings and short fishing trips, such an emphasis on aero- and hydrodynamics seems hardly necessary.

While *diavil* are the most reliable form of short-distance river and lake travel, the motor boat has a ubiquitous presence in Ilimpii. The boat, usually called *lodka* or *motorka* in Russian, is the most accessible form of motorized transport for Evenki people. The boats themselves are mostly made from a form of aluminum, and vary in size and shape. On the whole, however, they tend to be no more than ten feet long. While the Soviet boat motors are prone to frequent breakdowns and require near continuous maintenance, the boats themselves are robust, light, and hydrodynamically efficient.

Another excerpt from my journals provides an illustration of riverine travel in post-Soviet Evenkiia:

> In mid-summer 1999, Andre and Tanya's herd is located a four hour boat trip down the Viliui, depending how often the motor breaks down and how many rapids need to be forded. When we come to one of these rapids, someone has to hop out of the boat, climb to one side of the bank, and walk the boat over the rushing water with a long rope. The left bank of the Verkhnyi Viliuikan is marked by a walking trail that runs deep into the taiga. Mostly it is kept as a path by dogs, but its presence suggests that one could travel quite far on foot. The journey was notable for two motor failures and encounters with several people in motor boats and, closer to town, handmade canoes. Finding our bearings we set out in search of a fence, then beyond to a *d'iu*—an Evenki conical tent that is used only in the summer time in the Ilimpii. Eventually we find a tent but it turns out to be that belonging to Tanya's brother who is part of the hunting brigade but lives in a separate *d'iu*. After searching about for a while we finally locate the tent where our hosts Tanya and Andre are living with their son and his friend. It is important to notice who is here; it is late summer and there is no school: these kids are free. The son's friend has hardly ever been to the forest. Tanya says that he is too troublesome to have around. He doesn't understand Evenki and he doesn't know the rules for living in camp. She says they'll take him back soon. On our way down river, one of the motorboats that we encountered was driven by the other herders who were going to town for a break, to get supplies, and other reasons that I don't know about. The corral that the Udygir's were using was big enough that the reindeer could disappear, but as the flies and mosquitoes were starting to get bad, the herd didn't travel far from the campsite where the herders built smudge fires that would keep the bloodsucking bugs away from the reindeer. So, when the herd was not grazing, they would come back to camp and laze around in the smoke.

In Ekonda, the majority of the motors are of Soviet-era fabrication. Tura, on the other hand, has a much greater variety of motors and boats, including foreign motors like Evenrude and Suzuki. Ownership of any sort of motor and boat combination, however, is not common among Evenkis. As Evenki people have greater local networks of kinship and seem to have a less exclusive attitude towards individual property, or at least use of property, there may be less incentive to acquire expensive commodities like motors, boats, snowmachines, etc. In addition, endemic poverty precludes many from the option of acquisition in the first place.

On each of our numerous journeys on the Olenek river in 1995, there was some sort of mechanical failure of the motorboat. Both Russians and Evenkis claim, as a truism, that one cannot make a river journey without engine trouble. My experience corroborates this point of vernacular commonsense. Without the technical knowledge to maintain a motor with minimal tools and parts, a journey can end in disaster. Given the increasing unavailability of parts and tools, more and more people are forced to make such journeys with only the learned skills of 'bushcraft'. While I was in Ekonda my host, an Evenki man employed by the sovkhoz, had access to a boat. With this vessel he checked on his fish nets twice a day, exploiting a fishing hole much further up the Viliuikan than those who had access only to *diavs*. We also used this motorboat to shuttle several hours up river to visit his brother's reindeer herd.

Tura is different than Ekonda in that it is far wealthier and located more closely to channels of distribution for gas, oil, and parts. The majority of the motorboats are recreational vessels used in the summer for berry and herb picking, small hunting and camping excursions, and occasional day trips. This is largely a Russian cultural practice—but one shared by Evenkis with access to the means of travel. The trip I took from Tura to the banks of the river where Vasili Branat's herd was located was a particularly interesting trip. In part, it was meant to impress the wealthy foreigner (me) who had already been hosted by Branat. Kostia Khutukogir took us. I am uncertain whether he is related to Branat. He is, however Dima's mother's brother, and Dima is related to Branat through his cousin's father. More importantly, Kostia received a share of the deer that was slaughtered—this was in a meat-poor time. Branat was able to secure a motorboat through a promise to Kostia of meat, who in turn used his leverage or social capital as a security guard for the Ministry of Environmental Protection to negotiate the use of a motorboat. It is not clear to me why Branat was in Tura to begin with. Why he did not walk back to the herd is another question. Dima, who did walk back to Tura a couple of days after I returned by boat, spent about six hours on the trail that followed the river. The boat trip, not counting the numerous breakdowns, was only about an hour-and-a half long. The significance of this trip lay in the complex negotiations surrounding the use of a motorboat, which ultimately belonged to the Ministry of Environmental Protection. The motor boat was perfectly adequate to meet our travel needs only because Branat's herd, through fortuity or good planning, was located near the river.

5.5. Aerial mobility

> The creation of aerial transport—a remarkable feat of the Soviet people for the mastery of the Soviet North. [Uvachan 1971: 236]

As the state farms from the period of high socialism are gradually liquidated, reindeer are transferred to individual owners, and communally owned family-clan organizations [*obshchinas*]. At this point, many herders have ceased to be employees of the state, becoming private or contract herders. In conjunction with this shift in professional catagorization, there has been a parallel withdrawl of state subsidies at all levels, including northern economic development. In terms of state systems of transport, this has meant the effective removal of helicopters from the northern forest economy's transport complex. Helicopters were integral to late-Soviet production ranching, enabling the movement of goods and people between sites of herding and sites of non-local commodity redistribution. The withdrawl of rotary-wing transport from the herding economy has also precipitated a change in the migrations of reindeer herders. With limited access to mechanized conveyance, the migratory cycle of many reindeer herders has apparently been shortened to maintain an accessible line of communication between the settlement and the reindeer camp. This section outlines the mobility that is now provided by aerial transport. More importantly, it takes note of the damage caused to remote communities through the withdrawl of regular flights.

Between June and November of 1999 I recorded six flights that left Tura for Ekonda. I was on three of these flights. The first of these was part of an uncommon Red Cross humanitarian aid mission. Living near the heliport, I successfully negotiated a place on that flight. A mixture of luck and the ambiguous and confusing authority of being a foreigner afforded me a place on the helicopter. Also aboard were a Krasnoiarsk TV crew, several American Red Cross workers, translators, local politicians, and two men returning home to Ekonda. In Ekonda, with often no more than ten minutes of notice, the arrival of the helicopter is a festive social institution. When the manager of the aerodrome receives news of an incoming flight he announces it over loud speakers and the villagers begin to prepare for its arrival. Chaotically descending on the village from outside the local calendar of events, we were met by a large crowd of curious townspeople. This was no ordinary flight—it was a delivery of aid. The politicians distributed packages of Chinese noodles to the children and the camera crew wandered about filming the children as they devoured the noodles. Most of the Ekondians just gathered and watched the short and queer performance of the outsiders. Some gave me mail and packages to take back to kin who would surely be waiting on the tarmac for the return of the helicopter. Nearly an hour and a half after arriving, the helicopter ladder was withdrawn, the heavy door closed on the throngs of people, and the nearly empty helicopter lifted off the ground. It was notably vacant of fish, berries, meat, and people. The uncommonly, and uneconomically, empty cabin was most likely due to the presence of Red Cross officials and local politicians. The pilots were, perhaps, wary of accepting the usual bribes to accept unofficial cargo.

My experience with helicopter transport in the Soviet North is that it has a dizzyingly complex and vast support network. During the Soviet era, all non-military aerial travel and transport came under the jurisdiction of the state company Aeroflot. In the post-Soviet era numerous private companies have replaced Aeroflot's monopoly. While at one time, fixed-wing aircraft were used internally for travel and transport in Evenkiia, at some point in the late Soviet era, rotary-wing aircraft, notably the large MI-8, came to prominence. These helicopters have a larger capacity to haul freight, but are far more costly to fly than fixed-wing alternatives. In Evenkiia, in 1999, the fuel systems of a number of small airplanes were converted to run on a less-expensive fuel. They were to be put into use in the district as part of the air fleet servicing the various settlements and regions. By the autumn of 2000 it was reported that the planes had successfully undergone fuel conversion and were actively servicing Evenkiia's remote settlements (Anderson, personal communication). The administration's response to prohibitively expensive fuel prices for non-converted aircraft is a reaction to the excessive fragility of the non-local networks of distribution. These networks, once subsidized under socialism, became fragile precisely due to the district's diminishing finances.

In the smallest settlements which are distant from regional centres, overt subsidy of helicopter travel has essentially dried up in the post-Soviet era. There persists, however, a de-facto, if tenuous, system of travel and transport subsidy. Passenger tickets for travel within the district were never bought or for that matter even issued.[51] Getting oneself or one's package on board a flight is achieved through luck, might, social connections, bribery, or a combination of these. Cash was almost never a component and there were no official rates for tickets or baggage. While there were no longer any scheduled flights to Ekonda—making it impossible to officially buy a ticket—there were a number of events that continue to provide for an air route to and from the regional centre.[52]

The seasonal migration of village children to the residential school is one of the only regular flights connecting Ekonda and Tura—the cost being paid for by the Ministry of Education. In recent years, even the negotiation of this flight has been difficult. The autumn of 1999 saw the children from Ekonda arriving one month late for school in Tura. Those who missed that flight would have few opportunities to make the journey at a later date. In this case the negotiation occurred at the level of the Ministry of Education and the local Aeroflot. The Ministry had no money to pay outright for the costly return trip and apparently lacked the social capital or bargaining power to arrange for a timely flight. Ultimately, the flight may have been paid for through complex networks of barter and exchange (Anderson 2000c) or the arrival of late federal transfer payments. It is important to understand that there are also exceedingly poor telecommunications linking Tura and the outlying settlements. In Ekonda, the only point of radio contact is situated in the settlement's airport which doesn't amount to much more than a short runway and a small cabin dominated by enormous and largely non-functional weather forecasting machines and radio equipment.

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[51] The negotiation of flights is itself in need of study and would make an excellent project in economic anthropology.

Apart from the student transit flights, the Ministry of Health funds aerial evacuations, called *sanreis* (med-flights), in the event of medical emergencies. There is an allocated budget for the med-flights, but they are not easy to secure. Before an evacuation will be ordered negotiations must occur between the local nurse-practitioner[53] or nurse's helper (in the event of the nurse's absence) and the head doctor at the regional hospital in Tura. The med-flight is one of the only points for local manipulation of the highly circumscribed helicopter fleet. While the flight can ultimately be ordered by the local authorities through a negotiation of mayor, state farm manager, and medical representative, it is not guaranteed to arrive. This can result from poor weather or other mitigating factors such as more highly ranked appropriations of the helicopter, maintenance and breakdowns, and lack of fuel.

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[52] David Anderson reports that, as of the Autumn of 2000, tickets are now sold (personal communication). I wonder if people in Ekonda and Tura have access to the cash that is necessary to purchase such tickets. A strict adherence to this system may further serve to marginalize rural Evenkis who have little access to cash.

[53] A nurse and nurse-practitioner are differently qualified health practitioners. According to the medical system in the Russian Federation, the nurse-practitioners have a greater mandate to conduct minor operations, administer certain drugs etc. Tura is the site of the only northern training institute for such nurse-practitioners and it has a mandate to educate native Siberians for work in remote settlements.

The second trip that I made to Ekonda was with my spouse and daughter, unlike my first trip it was anticipated a short time in advance. The process of finding out and knowing about a flight is a challenging activity facilitated by social contacts. I believe this particular flight occurred as part of a local administration/*sovkhoz* flight that was transporting oil to run the local diesel-powered electric generating station. On that flight was also an expedition of mammothologists, paleontologists who were searching for remnants of the legendary wooly mammoths of Siberia. Our return from Ekonda on this second trip was precipitated by the need to evacuate our daughter for medical attention. Ironically, the local nurse-practitioner was in northern Canada on the same aid project that helped to fund my work in Evenkiia. In place of the nurse-practitioner, a woman who acted as an untrained nurse's aide was in charge of the settlement clinic, serving over five hundred people. Ultimately, a medical evacuation was negotiated, although in the end it was not successfully negotiated for our daughter but for a man who was wounded in a skirmish of some sort, and an elderly woman who needed to travel to the centre for medical treatment. While we were in Ekonda there were several helicopters working in the area, though they only landed in the village to serve the needs of geologists conducting oil exploration surveys.

The final flight to Ekonda on which I travelled was part of the scheduled scholastic transit which was to collect students for the boarding school in Tura (grades 4 to 11). It was also negotiated through commitments to the Canadian International Development Agency project (through in-kind contributions), delivering a team of Canadian healthcare-delivery experts. Our return flight seems to have been negotiated partly through the *sovkhoz*. On this trip I was conscripted by the lure of an anthropologically interesting site to fly to an outlying lake, Suringde, where there was at one time a large fish processing operation which supplied food to the front lines during the Second World

War.[54] When we arrived at the frozen lake we were met by a number of Evenki men who had been fishing the lake. They uncovered their store of jack fish and we bagged several tonnes of three-foot fish in burlap sacks and hauled them to the helicopter. The helicopter crew took a portion of the fish, and the rest were redistributed at the airport, an important site for the movement of country foods. The tarmac is the point where most country food is redistributed to family and friends living in the regional centre. I took several bags of the fish home with me, sharing them on my own terms.

The arrival of the migratory *morskoe* reindeer in Essei is a highly anticipated event. For relatives in Tura, remittances of fresh frozen meat are equally anticipated. Fresh meat is something that all people crave—especially those with no cash to enjoy the Brazilian poultry and Chinese beef sold in grocery stores. As flights between remote settlements and the district centre have become rare in the post-Soviet era, there is always a great flush of people attempting to send gifts, remittances, and family members aboard the few flights which take place. Remittances are important for urban family members who suffer poor nutrition due to the combination of a near total absence of cash and the high price of food in Tura. For many Evenkis, the urban diet consists mostly of bread, Chinese noodles, pasta, and fish. On one occasion, in the month of October, I witnessed a helicopter full of reindeer carcasses arrive from the northern community Essei. The meat was rapidly unloaded and carted off by urban kin of the mostly Sakha (Yakut) hunters. In my time in Tura there was never any comparable remittance of meat from Ekonda. This is primarily because of the Soviet state's alteration of the migratory patterns of northern caribou, which was discussed above.

The appropriation of mobile technologies is a broadly politicized area. While two Canadian technical advisors were visiting Tura, they were flown to a distant cottage by a senior official in the local administration. Despite their need to return after a couple of days to rendezvous with a flight in Krasnoiarsk, the group was stranded in the taiga for a week. In this instance, it appears that they were the unwitting victims of a political struggle between the regional administration and some other forces within the ranks of Aeroflot. The control over the means of travel and transport can be a major recourse to individual power. Anderson (1995a) evidently felt the same, as he includes in an appendix of his dissertation a graph calculating the incomes by profession in the Khantaika. In one sub-section of the calculation, he ranks professions according their access to transport (1995a: 280). The significance is that in a circumstance of limited travel opportunities, access to the means of conveyance is a lucrative commodity. If travel on the inter-regional level is an effective lever for the exertion of power, the intra-regional level presents even more opportunities to manipulate one's social capital. This was obviously the case in the 1999 political feuds played out between the Krasnoiarsk Territory and the Evenki Autonomous district. The lack of political power suffered by Evenkiia's representatives was evident in the District's obvious dependence on external subsidies for the functioning of nearly every aspect of life in the settlement.

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[54] As noted in chapter three, it figures in the life histories of many elders, especially women.

Helicopters are an important symbol of Soviet and post-Soviet ideologies. As I have shown in the chapter on Soviet travel, progress has been a central theme in Soviet policy, philosophy, and nationalist politics, and the helicopter represents the apex of progress in Arctic transportation. As mechanically complex technological devices, vital military weapons, and versatile transport vehicles, helicopters embody Soviet ideals of progress. Helicopter technology, and aviation in general, can be considered a performance of the Soviet state's system of mechanized travel. As an embodied demonstration of state power, its use is circumscribed through centralized networks of authority and it tends to be mobilized regardless of local schedules. Quite literally, it descends, apparently at random to most people, upon the settlement. As the helicopter arrives it is met not on the terms of the locals but rather as a sovereign representative of the state or, at least an external authority, demanding appropriate displays of behaviour and discipline. As a symbol, it stands in part for the fragile and dislocated corridors of transport that are the life-line of the settlement. Helicopter transport is a survival of the era of socialist transport subsidy that is highly vulnerable as a broadly de-localized technological system.

According to Symons and White, "The propaganda value of impressively large machines . . . appealed to Soviet leaders, as in other spheres of mechanization" (1975: 144). The performance of high technology and the embedded concealment of the background of this technology was meant to signify success and progress. This ideology is evident in many photographs and illustrations that decorate Soviet journals, magazines, newspapers, and books. A central trope in these publications is the visual montage of so-called modern and primitive technologies. Reading against the grain, the juxtaposed images are localized and de-localized vehicles; mechanized and non-mechanized devices. The heroic moment is resident in the original introduction of the device to the 'primitive' taiga scene (implied in any single image of modern/traditional juxtaposition) and is meant to attest to the greatness of the modern state which, through its complex bureaucratic structures, can deliver modernity to the darkest corners of the empire through the magic of state subsidy. Air transportation transcends the limitations of land engagement. Militarily, the bird's eye view, which can operate similarly to Foucault's (1977) discussion of panopticism, is immensely powerful in extending the hegemony of the state's landscape. The juxtaposition of high technology alongside apparently simpler technologies is an exercise in the self-validation of technological progress.

M.R. Smith and Leo Marx engage a similar subject in his study of the vocabulary of representation in technological determinist paradigms emerging in the post-war America. In an exploration of the imagery surrounding the rise of the modernist and technocratic definitions of technology Smith writes of one lithograph from 1868 in which "[a]s if to underscore the nation's destiny, the train is set on an endless trajectory, sweeping aside the remnants of Native American culture with its powerful puffs of dark smoke" (1994: 9). The image on the cover of Uvachan's (1971) book tells a similar tale but one which resides within the dogma of socialist industrialism. As if underscoring the Soviet nation's destiny the helicopter is welcomed into the community of Arctic vehicles just as the indigenous Evenkis are welcomed into the international community of socialism.

6. Conclusion

I set out to demonstrate that an ethnography of travel is the most useful approach to understand the complex socio-political landscape in east-central Siberia. The central objectives of this thesis have been twofold. I have initiated an ethnography of travel and engaged in a study of both Evenki peoples' mobility and their current lack of mobility in the face of impoverishment and isolation. Rapid change in Evenkis' access to particular forms of mobility resulted from historic events originating at other points in the Soviet and Russian states during the twentieth century. Such an ethnography necessarily brings together the study of material culture with the social organization of mobility. On a spectrum ranging from nomadic to settled, this approach has been particularly useful in highlighting the details of Evenki people's de-mobilization in the post-Soviet era. In this conclusion, I will tie together the four central issues that define my ethnography of travel: de-mobilisation, de-localization and systemic fragility, the Soviet system of mechanized travel, and the Evenki system of paths.

In exploring the ways Evenki people travel in east-central Siberia, I have focussed my attention on the material conditions that have resulted in their isolation and de-mobilization. The focus on travel and the technologies of mobility is meant to unravel the predicament of the Evenki peoples vis-à-vis the state. On the one hand, this explores the negotiation involved in travelling and the effort of the state to impose 'appropriate' patterns of movement—implying a schema of resistances and accommodations. On the other hand, this explores theories of technology and how they fit with Evenki practices.

Looking at travel is also a way of destabilizing the notion of bounded communities. This is especially important in the central Siberian scene, where settlement in villages was forced by the state in the early twentieth Century and remains, less than a century later, an incomplete marker of social identity. Thus, affiliation to one's settlement is ambiguously shared with older family and clan affiliations that pre-dated sedentarization. The traditional ethnographic object of the culturally homogenous and stable community, emphasized under the British school of functionalism, is clearly not a viable approach to understanding the Evenkis' predicament, given the extent of their travels prior to and during the Soviet era. Further research will inevitably have to confront the instability and heterogeneity of Evenki settlements. In this confrontation, one can only hope to add to an understanding of social relations, community, and travel in the early twenty-first century.

Because of some Evenkis' involvement in the production of Soviet Evenkiia, an ongoing dichotomization of colonizer and colonized can only be used with caution. The term marginalized, however, carries enough of a generic sensibility that it has been useful here. Being marginalized suggests a peripheralness in relation to a centre. The rural Evenkis of east-central Siberia are quite obviously on the geographic margins of human, administrative, and economic traffic in the Russian Federation. The construction of Soviet Evenkiia was an effort that marginalized the Evenki system of paths along with those who maintained it. While some Evenkis were involved in establishing a modern socialist state, along with the Soviet system of mechanized travel, most were highly peripheral to the process.

An ethnography of travel works on the assumption that people's mobility depends on their interaction with one another as well as with material objects. It is an approach to understanding the particularities of cultural landscapes as places through which people travel and within which they negotiate social positions. Within the context of these cultural landscapes, I have used Pelto's (1973) idea of de-localization to demonstrate the process whereby the Evenkis came to depend upon non-local resource inputs in their daily lives. In Bryan Pfaffenberger's account, "de-localization may expand the geographical scope within which people actively appropriate artifacts, with extensive implications for social and cultural change" (1992: 511). This expanded geographical scope is enabled through machine conveyance. While the geographical scope of Evenki people's travels was already broad, under socialism the Soviet system of mechanized travel changed the nature of Evenkis' paths and propelled them further than ever from the taiga lands. Modern mobility in east-central Siberia has been a de-localized technological system that is contingent on costly and constant subsidies from Moscow, Krasnoiarsk, and other centres of administration. I have identified this contingency as a systemic fragility that plagues socialist development in the Arctic. The vast expanses of taiga and tundra, supposedly overcome by mechanized travel, have presented a constant challenge to Russian and Soviet projects of colonization and governance.

The colonial encounter between Russians and Evenkis must not overshadow the way in which reindeer mobility facilitated inter-ethnic communication. The extensive travel patterns of many Evenkis in the Ilimpii, in the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras, put them in contact with many of the other peoples of Siberia. We know from Gurvich's work (1977) that, in the eastern area of the central Siberian plateau, there was a distinctive influx of Sakha-speaking people prior to the arrival of the Russians. The fluidity of ethnic identity, which was most notably discussed in Anderson's (2000b) ethnography, may well be, at least in part, derivative of an extensiveness of cultural contact. So we might see such fluidity not simply as the outcome of strategic resistance to state bureaucratization but also as a reflection of a very real indigenous landscape. The geography of inter-ethnic contact is difficult to map but, if we accept the extensiveness of Evenkis' travels, then it can be assumed that the arrival of Russian invaders and traders was not a situation of first contact but rather one in a long history of contacts and relations. The Russian colonization of Siberia was, of course, of an entirely different order than preceding encounters, for it marked the beginning of a long history of marginalization and modernization.

As I showed in chapter three, the relationship between the Evenkis of the central Siberian plateau and the Slavic invaders from the west developed gradually over several hundred years. During this period, the Evenkis' paths changed from earlier, pre-contact ways, but they did so within the framework of localized vehicles. The practices of reindeer breeding and training, the construction of sleighs and saddles, and the use and maintenance of roads, paths, and trails are all part of the Evenki system of paths. The skills and knowledge to build vehicles and navigate successfully through the taiga are the fundaments of the notion of localized technologies of mobility.

Through the long colonial encounter, generations of Evenkis gradually saw the erosion of their autonomy through the increasing presence of the state. The colonial administrations of such a remote place were at first concerned with extracting only tribute from the Evenkis. However, by the end of the seventeenth century, after two hundred years of colonial governance, a major shift began to alter the Russian Empire's self image. Frontiers became borders and the tribute-paying 'natives' became state subjects and citizens. In the eighteenth century, Russia entered into a project of re-constructing itself according to particular aesthetics of modernity.[55] The ideal trappings of the modern state included efficient colonial bureaucracies, the establishment of museums, the creation of maps, and the taking of censuses. The inclusion of the colonized peoples in the workings of the administration, however, would have to wait until the Soviet era.

The Soviet administration of Evenkiia was characterized by the state's dual commitments to socialism and industrialization. Social development through propaganda and the establishment of socialist organizational structures was an important undertaking in the 1930s following the civil war. Over the next seven decades, great efforts were made by the state to impose an internationalist culture of socialism alongside a fully industrialized, mechanized economy. The Soviet Union at that time was a form of state nationalism "oriented toward incorporating groups into a larger community and creating a common identity which supports the development of hegemonic state institutions" (Alfred 1995: 14). In the period of high socialism, the Soviet settlements came to be increasingly attractive places with libraries, doctors, dentists, gymnasiums, and theatres for films and drama. While Pika's (1999) "shift-work method," discussed in chapter four, may have played a role in the erosion of "traditional livelihoods and values" many Evenkis were actively constructing themselves as modern Soviet-Evenki citizens.

The Soviet system of mechanized travel reached for the ideal modern socialist sensibilities of speed and efficiency. It introduced a new temporality and collapsed time through the triumph of speed, redefining the meaning and accessibility of extensive travel in a unified transport system:

> the railways, waterways, automobile and air transport have developed in the U.S.S.R. as a single system of transportation which systematically combines all forms of transport and works in accordance with a plan established by the state. [Lavrishchev in Mellor 1975: 76]

Suddenly more people were able to travel greater distances in shorter amounts of time. The technological hegemony of the Soviet state created a particular technical landscape in the North. My argument has shown that through state interventions like sedentarization, consolidation, mechanization and professionalization, Evenki social interactions became entwined in the production of the state's modern sensibilities. Moreover, the rural Evenkis ended up in a situation where they were dependent on the techniques and technologies of state socialism. It turns out that de-localization extended

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[55] cf. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) for the definitive introduction to the modern nation as an historically situated project that was portable and formulaic.

deep into the workings of daily life in a rural Siberian settlement. The fragility of the redistributive networks that enabled Soviet Evenkiia to operate under socialism has emerged as a central factor in post-Soviet crises. The entire geography of rural Siberia had come to be so dependent on socialist subsidy of travel and transport and centralized communities and administrations that they have become structurally de-mobilized under the capitalist market reforms of the post-Soviet era.

If social landscapes are always sites of negotiation and contest then James Scott's (1985) everyday forms of resistance—the weapons of the weak—are indeed the bargaining tools of the state's colonial subjects. Fleron (1977) wrote about the ideological seeds embedded in technology and their potential to transform social relations. The application of governance and sedentarization in the Soviet North was indeed an example of this. With a good deal of state coercion, for example, the European style house or cabin was shifted from a marginal element in the seasonal round to a central part of Evenki experience. The relocation of women and children into log homes, following the ideology of sedentarization, was at once an assimilative tactic, a bureaucratic move to administrative efficiency, and a humanitarian gesture. Ironically, it failed to live up to Soviet ideals of gender equity, instead replicating the spatial-labour inequity of Slavic domestic relations. This is not to undermine the significant points of resistance and Evenki cultural continuity, but to pay equal attention to assimilation and culture change. Soviet Evenkiia is as much about the Evenki transformation or localization of Soviet modernity as it is about the fundamental restructuring of Evenki practices in the context of the new Soviet political-cultural hegemony.

The ideas of de-localization and de-mobilization run parallel to one another and are intertwined with my characterization of the Evenki system of paths and the Soviet system of mechanized travel. State-sanctioned travel was variable, even pliable, but was clearly limited as access to mobility was, in a large part, circumscribed through professional institutions and affiliations. The Evenkis on the land were largely employed as hunters, herders, and fishers. Each of these professions, organized under the rural state farms, such as the Ekonda sovkhoz, had different ways of moving on the land. Until the introduction of mechanization and the necessary infrastructure for overland mobility, however, reindeer provided the primary means of transport. While the Evenki peoples living on the central Siberian plateau were slowly becoming more and more involved in the projects of the state, even if in the most marginal ways, a degree of independence and autonomy was maintained through their advanced overland mobility. Some herders developed an industry of overland cargo and freight carriage to service the riverbound Russians during the Tsarist and early Soviet periods. The work of these *Kaery* was tremendously important to the development of the Russian Empire, as well as the Soviet Union right up to the 1950s and 1960s. Until the era of mechanization—which was always a partial, incomplete, and inconsistent project—the primacy of 'working deer' over deer raised for meat was promoted through the freight and taxi industry. In his ethnography of the Taimyr Evenkis, Anderson writes:

> From 1937 to the 1960s the [collective] farm fed the state with furs (sable and arctic fox), leased reindeer for hauling freight, and provided wild deer venison and fish to the hungry sedentary employees of the settlement offices. During this era before snowmobiles and helicopters, the mobile economy was supported by reindeer bred, trained and kept especially for transport (and not for meat). [2000b: 52]

While some Evenki production units bred their herds to capitalize on the cargo and carriage industry that existed prior to mechanization, the focus later turned to the production of herds with population structures that would provide saleable quantities of meat. These were both outcomes of Soviet development and industrialization policies and were connected to the establishment of the Soviet system of mechanized travel.

My study of present-day technological dysfunction in Evenkiia has shown that mechanized vehicles provided symbolic validation for Soviet modernity's attachment to the ideology of progress. Under the Soviet state, this ideology was salient, ubiquitous, and practically inviolate. The rhetoric of progress tied stages of social evolution to technological change through a paradigm of Marxist-Leninist historical-materialism. The indigenous peoples of Siberia were, according to this paradigm, required to catch up to the industrializing centre of Russia, which was on an unswerving road to socialism.

Human social evolution in this case had a clearly technologically deterministic character. The examination of technological devices must proceed cautiously, with an eye to the precipitous edges leading to implicit theses of unilineal progress. A technological determinism tends to be the dominant reading resultant from this type of narrative. The narrative is, in turn, self-affirming, so that the rise of more and more complex technologies seems an inevitable historical process. Thus, the fur boot begat the harnessed reindeer which begat the sleigh, which was displaced by the snowmobile, truck, and helicopter—each in their own way located on rational tracks that lead from the past to the present. My response to this determinism—an attempt to destabilize the techno-determinist narrative—has been to explore vehicles as historically and socially situated artifacts, rather than as technologies which abstractly represent progress. In this way, the focus moves away from the contentious rhetoric of technological progress to highlight the social life of things in their interaction with people situated in time and space.

The Soviet system of mechanized travel, as an offshoot of Soviet modernity, created severe conditions of dependency in east-central Siberia. Under the conditions of state-abandonment in the post-Soviet era, this dependency has resulted in high levels of marginalization, impoverishment, malnutrition, and sickness. These have been compounded through Evenkis' inability to access the means of travel—effectively isolating them in their rural settlements. The de-localization of mobility led to the *de-mobilization* of Evenkis because there was a parallel experience of de-skilling through the Soviet era. In many ways, sedentarization has altered the cultural horizon, or imaginative possibilities, of rural Evenkis. The consolidation of rural settlements extended the spaces of taiga between villages at the same time as Evenkis working on the land were turned into professional herders and hunters. Making long journeys through the taiga on reindeer became an inconceivable option for settled Evenkis. The dominance of Soviet transport systems effectively shifted reindeer from being associated with general mobility to being a component or tool within the rural economy. In other words, the importance of reindeer mobility was supplanted by reindeer economy. In this turn, the use-value of reindeer was not so much their ability to operate as a means of conveyance, but as meat. Alternately, machine conveyance defined mobility along the highly circumscribed corridors of Soviet travel.

The de-skilling of Evenkis distanced most people from the traditional Evenki system of paths. Thus, the skills and knowledge to travel on the land were largely compromised in the socialist compact that led to the Soviet system of mechanized travel. The powers and events that brought Soviet Evenkiia into being, that established modern mechanized travel, have in the post-Soviet era, left legacies of irreparable structures. Structures left standing, such as the settlement, impede the actions of rural Evenkis whose social marginalization is partly tied to failed and failing technological systems.

The Soviet system of mechanized travel is mechanized, bureaucratized, professionalized, and centralized. It delivers its subjects along appropriate trails or corridors of experience, dropping them off at contact zones where the system is supposedly reproduced but is actually subtly transformed by the seemingly endless queue of participants. Despite Evenkis' participation in, and creative alteration of, modern travel, the fundamental dependence upon de-localized systems of exchange and subsidy render colonized peoples susceptible to non-local, or globalized social and political change. Because of this the settlements that house rural Evenkis in the Ilimpii are not only contingent on non-local decision-making, but are also built environments that impede the traditional Evenki system of paths. This process of ghettoization is clearly effected through a mixture of social and technical impediments.

In his work *Modernity at Large,* Appadurai writes that "with the advent of the steamship, the automobile, [and] the airplane ... we have entered into an altogether new condition of neighborliness, even with those most distant from ourselves" (Appadurai 1996: 29). This neighbourliness is perceived chiefly as a condition of technological progress whereby global practices are bound to technological determinisms. But if the condition of neighbourliness is truly linked to mechanized travel then the absence of the option to participate in mechanized travel in peoples' lives is surely a point of exclusion. For the Evenkis in central Siberia, who could be said to have once enjoyed the sort of neighbourliness imagined by Appadurai, the present situation can be likened to an expulsion from the modern globalizing community. The isolation of rural Evenkis has resulted from both political neglect and the failure of modern technological systems, which are passively assumed by many scholars to be interminable. Vehicles that have vast technological backgrounds, with truly global networks, are de-localized and contingent on the fragile networks that they are meant to facilitate. The immense geographical distances of Siberia, supposedly overcome with the 'advent' of modern mobility, have re-emerged as very real impediments to Evenki well-being and systemic resilience.

My unease with Appadurai's tendency to overstate global connections is reflected by Clifford Geertz, who remains skeptical of a homogenous global village while recognizing "the powerfully connecting forces of modern manufacture, finance, travel, and trade" (2000: 248). The connecting forces of global industry and capital are real but we must be careful not to extend this in a romanticization that imagines ubiquitous access to 'modern' forms of mobility. These 'connecting forces' are actually great sources of frustration and depression for people who are now only receiving scattered dispatches from the core axes of global wealth and capital. In contrast to the apparently universal diasporas, de-mobilized and isolated Evenkis leave their settlements only rarely and only occasionally have recourse to cash or commodity remittances. Stunted flows of goods and people do not make good connecting forces. Where once there were effective diasporas and extensive communities of kin there are now isolated and impoverished Evenkis suffering shortages of essential foods and medicines.

Today, a single winter road connects the settlements of northern Evenkiia to more southerly centres of trade and exchange. And like the dominant river paths of the Tsarist and early Soviet eras, the sheltered view from the winter road allows only the most limited glimpses of the taiga landscape beyond. Local travel for some Evenkis has continued to reproduce a traditional system of paths which is maintained by the movement of hunters and herders throughout the region. Unfortunately, mechanized mobility in the post-Soviet era has diminished in conjunction with dwindling redistributive flows of capital and commodities. The absence of opportunities to creatively manipulate non-existent resources from remote settlements in rural Siberia presents daunting and improbable grounds for local empowerment. The technological hegemony of the Soviet state created a particular technical landscape in the North. My argument has shown that through state interventions like sedentarization, consolidation, mechanization, and professionalization, Evenki social interactions became entwined in the state's modern sensibilities. What's more, and this is the crux, the rural Evenkis ended up with a social landscape that was reliant on the techniques and technologies of socialism, a landscape notable for its fragile dependency on unreliable corridors of redistribution.

In closing, let us return to east-central Siberia where aerial mobility at the most regional levels is largely beyond the reach of rural Evenkis and even land transport requires the mobilisation of rare and lucrative social capital. High above the central Siberian plateau, major transcontinental flights transport hundreds of people from Asia to Europe on a daily schedule. Giant 747s, barely visible to the eye, leave behind evidence of global mobility. As the vapour trails of the long-past aircraft leisurely dissipate overhead Evenki hunters, herders, and villagers are privilege only to watch the passing of these global commuters.

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University of Alberta

THE EVENKI SYSTEM OF PATHS
A study of travel and technology in east-central Siberia

by

Craig A.R. Campbell ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Evenki system of paths: a study of travel and technology in east-central Siberia submitted by Craig A.R. Campbell in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

David G. Anderson

Eric Higgs

Naomi T. Krogman
Naomi Krogman

Date: May 18 2004

for Rowan Maggie Oissin Campbell
and her mother

Abstract

The distinctly marginalized character of life in remote villages of central Siberia's Arctic peripheries can be read as a profoundly technological dilemma. While travel was common for indigenous Evenki people in the Soviet era, they have been increasingly de-mobilized in the first decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Given their legendary status as great nomadic travelers on the one hand, and the much touted 'opening' of the former Soviet bloc, on the other, this is a disturbing irony. The disempowerment of remotely located Evenkis is directly tied to the failure of Soviet technologies—crippled systems of transport—which colour all contemporary interactions with a so-called 'globalizing world'. With reference to my original fieldwork conducted in east-central Siberia, I confront the technologies of mobility taken for granted in assumptions about globalism and argue that for Evenkis of the post-Soviet world, globalism represents marginalization rather than linkages and cross-national flows of ideas and people.

Acknowledgements

Research for this project was undertaken in two six month trips to central Siberia. During this time I was helped, hosted, fêted, and befriended by countless people. Any names escaping the velvet trap of my memory are only absent because of my own oversight. For this I apologize. Both trips were undertaken with financial aid from the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies and the Canadian Circumpolar Institute which provided Canadian Boreal Alberta Research Grants.

On the circuitous trails that link the taiga of east-central Siberia to Cabbage Town, Madeira Park and Old Strathcona I have encountered so many people to whom I am grateful. I would like to thank the people of Olenek who welcomed me so graciously into their lives. I am especially grateful to Elena, Panfil, Marina, Masha and Saia for sharing their home and caring for me. My colleagues at the Olenekskii Middle School are also to be thanked for their hospitality. Greg Poelzer and Gail Fondahl were most supportive in getting me over to Siberia in the first place. In Sakha I was kindly aided in my efforts to head North by Piers Vitebsky and Tanya Argunova.

My second journey to Central Siberia was undertaken in conjunction with a Canadian International Development Agency project. There are many people in Tura and Ekonda that extended friendship and support for me and my family. I am particularly indebted to Maria Kurtukova, Irina and Vasilii Kicheev, Galina Ivanovna Khutukogir, Vera Ivanovna Burima, Dima and Lena Chumak and many others who met with me for interviews, tea, and conversation. I was generously hosted in the taiga by Vasilii Branat and his brigade of reindeer herders (Nevolin, Vasilii, and Igor). The gang from the Treasury offered friendship, music, electronic mail, and drink that was most welcome in occasional pits of homesickness. Hosts and friends in Ekonda include Andrei, Tania, Alexei, and Katia. Alexei and Tania kindly took Lise, Rowan, and me to the taiga, introducing us to the pleasures of tent life in Siberia.

Support from the department of Anthropology has been legendary and I am especially grateful to Gail Mathew, Owen Beattie, and Cheryl Luchkow for their administrative support. Liz and Robin have also offered aid on countless occasions. The faculty at the University of Alberta has provided me with the tools necessary to write the thesis which would have scarcely emerged without the patient advice and careful encouragement of Dr. Anderson, Dr. Higgs, and Dr. Palmer. I am grateful for the opportunity to study with and learn from Jeff Snodgrass and Milton Freeman. I would also like to thank Heather Young Leslie and Mike Evans for their friendship. Mike's enthusiasm, grace, and respect make up a large part of the reason that I entered graduate school. For a lively and challenging academic community I tip my hat to Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, Claudio Aporta, Mark Ebert, Rob Wishart, Paul Harms, Mark Watson, Carol Berger, the ladies from the FANCi lab. People who've supported me from all sides of this country, I hope you know who you are. I am grateful and will always be prepared to repay in kind.

My supervisor David Anderson has been a force like no other. Through his untiring commitment to research in Siberia as well as advocacy for Evenkis in Taimyr and Evenkiia I have learned a great deal. Without David's work I would hardly have been able to travel with Lise and Rowan to Siberia, which in turn would have truncated my field work and made this a much less interesting paper. The integrity and quality of David's academic research and writing astounds me and I only hope that this thesis will justly reflect the time and support he has given me over the past three years.

Finally my family must be collectively thanked for their love and belief in my ability to complete this project. This includes both Wilsons and Campbells on either end of the country. Chris McCutcheon and Taralee Alcock my kin by choice cannot possibly know how grateful I am for their love.

Rowan is as old as this thesis, which is a rather poor sibling I admit, but one which was written in the midst of her discoveries, amazement, frustration, and enjoyment with this world. This work is dedicated to her and her mother. Without the undying support of my partner Lise this thesis would have looked very different. Their constancy, love, and commitment are infused in every word. *Blessed be.*

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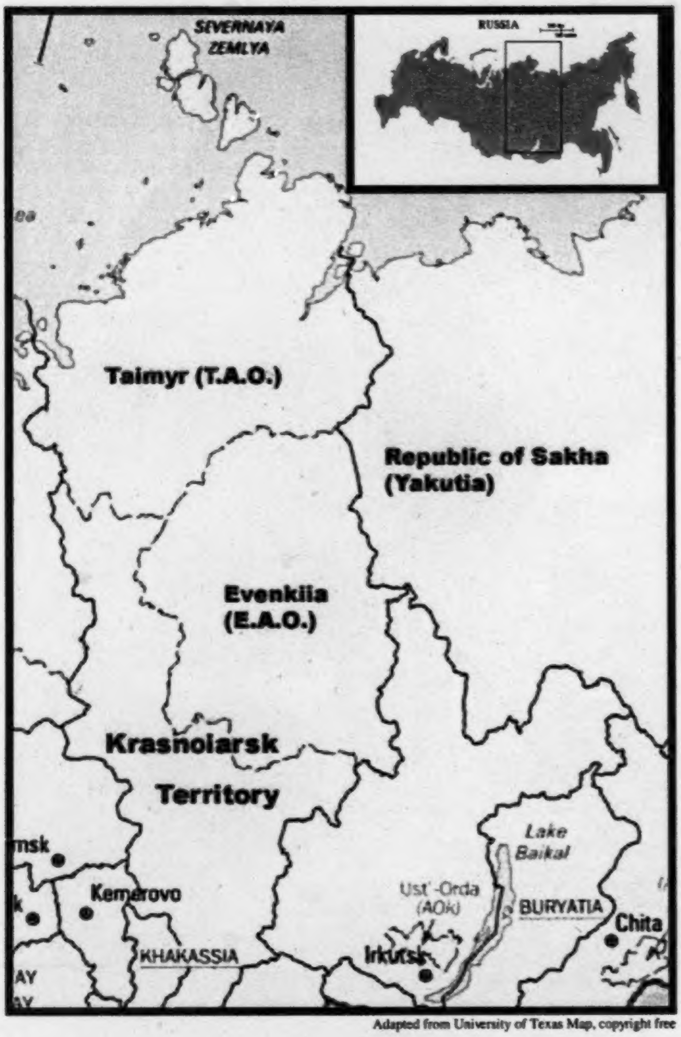
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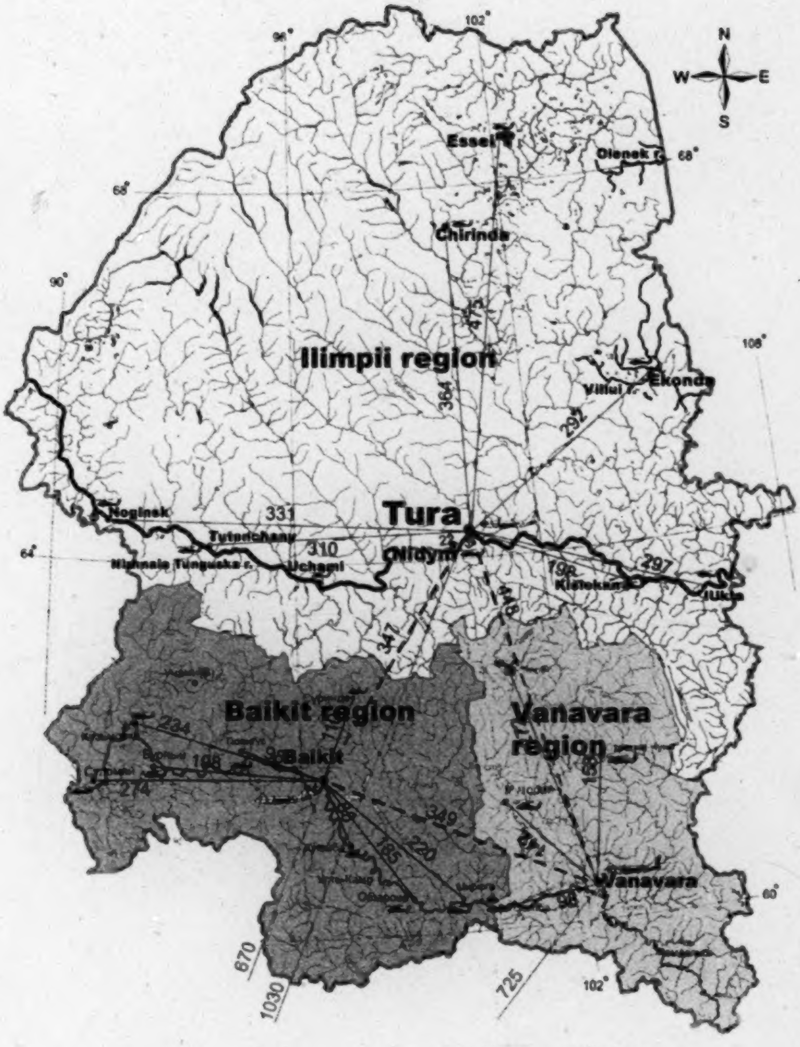
Figure 1 Evenki Autonomous Okrug, Russia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Nidym
64°
Nizhnaia Tunguska r.
Uchami
198
297
Kislokan
Iukta
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448
Baikit region
Vanavara
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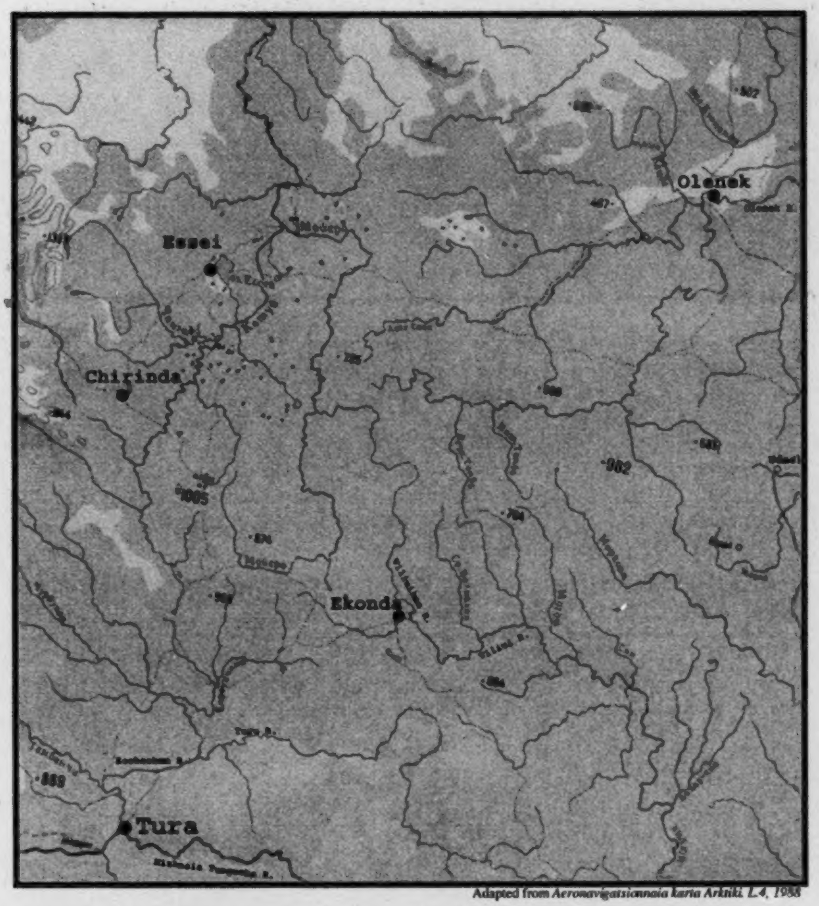
Adapted from anonymous Russian map

Figure 2 Ilimpii Region, E.A.O.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Tura

Adapted from *Aeronavigatsionnaia karta Arktiki. L.4*, 1988

Figure 3 Settlements in the traditional territory of the Ilimpii Evenkis

1. Introduction

For the Evenki peoples of Siberia travel includes hunting, trapping, gathering, and fishing as well as business trips, social visiting, and journeys by helicopter to the regional centre. It suggests trails, routes, roads, and highways but also has the implication of social mobility within established cultural frameworks. Many Evenkis from the Evenki Autonomous District in east-central Siberia tell stories of their distant origins. They speculate on their own ethnogenesis—various theories of early and late migrations—partaking, however peripherally, in a core dialogue of Soviet ethnography. These stories reside among countless others, including tales of the arrival of Europeans to the central Siberian plateau and distant travels along well-used trails to pay tribute and trade furs for flour, tobacco, and spirits. They also recall the decimation of entire families by intermittent plagues as well as reindeer epidemics (epizootics) that ravaged their herds. I have heard stories of the 'Siberian priest' who travelled between camps with an enclosed and insulated reindeer sleigh [*balok*]. Some Evenkis speak of a mysterious extraterrestrial explosion from the sky: the contested Tunguska meteorite, thought by some to be evidence of UFOs and the travels of beings from distant worlds. More recently, Evenkis recall their travels during the Soviet era, a time when their landscape was radically altered by the state's socio-economic engineering projects. Many Evenkis have travelled away from their home communities. Men have been drafted for service in the Soviet military, students have been sent to study in urban centres such as Leningrad and Krasnoiarsk, and others have moved to take advantage of the work opportunities and the amenities of large cities. The trans-local experiences of some Evenki people from remote villages are extensive while others have never left the taiga.

Since the time that the colonial agents of the Russian empire pushed beyond the Ural mountains at the end of the sixteenth century, an acceleration in trade and governance provoked a series of radical alterations in transportation technologies. By the twentieth century these were celebrated by the Soviet state as advances that affected all peoples in Siberia. Steam, and later, combustion-powered transport in the form of river-going barges, overland tractors and trucks, as well as fixed and rotary-wing aircraft became symbols of the encompassing progress brought by the Soviet state. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the deterioration of federal subsidies to rural Siberia, these symbols of Soviet progress quickly atrophied. The apparently progressive changes, which were imagined as technological advances, were as much about the way in which Evenkis travelled and used vehicles as they were about the development of new machines. These changes, however, are poorly characterized by the paradigms of technological advance and progress because the reliance of vehicles on non-local inputs and systems gained primacy in the era of Soviet industrialization, development, and mechanization. In other words, greater mechanical sophistication lead to a greater degree of dependence on resources and networks of redistribution for the normal functioning of vehicles.

Travel, technology, and power in the context of Evenki cultural practices in the post-Soviet Siberian scene are best understood in an exploration of the changing relations of Evenki peoples to the colonial state. Russian and Soviet policies towards rural Siberian peoples can be understood through a dual idiom. On the one hand we have the taiga nomads who have been living on, and moving through the forested landscape of east-central Siberia according to traditional paths and seasonal rounds. On the other hand, there is the prescribed policy of state intervention through centralized networks of mechanized mobility. By exploring the meaning of these idioms the layers of social relations which engage Evenki people regionally, nationally, and internationally through technologies of mobility can be understood. They also aid in understanding the current situation of marginalization and impoverishment in rural Evenkiia. I will explore these idioms through an ethnography of transport and travel and will follow a basic temporal schema beginning with the Russian imperial era and ending with the post-socialist reforms of the late twentieth century. While I am primarily concerned with the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, establishing the pre-Soviet historical scene provides important background for my argument. Throughout this work I will analyze the cultural particularities of mobility at both the local and state levels.

Understanding the current situation in rural Evenkiia cannot be accomplished without an examination of the vehicles and transport systems that are meant to provide mobility to remote outposts of Siberia. The second chapter theorizes the relationship of people to things, especially vehicles. The anthropological approach to material culture is used to explain the loss of local autonomy (de-localization), the susceptibility of Northern transport systems to collapse (fragility), extensive technological failure (technological dysfunction), and the resultant situation of isolation due to de-mobilization.

In the third chapter, the history of colonization, de-localization, and marginalization is explored through my ethnographic study of the mobility practices of Evenki people who live in what is now known of as the Ilimpii county or, simply, Ilimpii. Ilimpii is located in the Evenki Autonomous District (EAO;[1] or Evenkiia), in east-central Siberia {Fig. 1}. Prior to enforced sedentarization in the 1940s, the people living in this area were called Ilimpii Evenkis by Soviet authorities.[2] In their nomadic travels they moved far beyond the boundaries of the Ilimpii county. Thus the current boundaries of the Ilimpii county and the pre-Soviet territory of the Ilimpii Evenkis are not coterminous. In her 1969 ethnography, Soviet anthropologist Glafira Vasilevich presents a sketch of the territory of the Ilimpii Evenkis whose spheres of travel touched on modern-day

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[1] For coherence I maintain the Russian acronym E.A.O., referring to *Evenkiiskii Avtonomnyi Okrug*. In English, 'Okrug' is typically translated as District. Ilimpii Raion is translated as Ilimpii County.

Olenek District (in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutiia)), the Taimyr Autonomous District and much of east-central Siberia {Fig. 3}. The geography of the Ilimpii area, described by Vasilevich (1969), is a vast expanse of land demarcated by major rivers: the Nizhnaia Tunguska to the south, the Enisei to the west, and the Viliui and Olenek rivers to the east. The northern boundary was, perhaps most significantly, marked by the rough border between the taiga and the tundra. In this border region Anderson notes the existence of the 'Katanga Way', a major trade route through the Taimyr that was located just north of Essei (2000b: 15).[3]

In the fourth chapter, my primary goal is first to establish an understanding of the Evenkis' changing patterns of movement prior to the embracing reorganizational policies of the Soviet era and, second, to show how the intensive programs of social engineering in the Soviet period led to a restructuring of Evenki society. I will contrast the traditional Evenki system of paths based in reindeer mobility to European travel practices which were unable to efficiently navigate the taiga without recourse to river systems. I will relate the process whereby several hundred years of gradually intensifying European colonial encounters led to an explosion of state involvement in the organization of daily life among the Evenkis (Slezkine 1994; Grant 1995). The first forty years of socialism in east-central Siberia are then juxtaposed to the period of 'high socialism' which began in the 1950s and 1960s. This is a temporal delimitation noted in Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath's work, *The End of Nomadism?* (1999). Prior to this era of high socialism, the alterations in the Evenkis' social organization were limited, though not insignificant. It was not until mechanization and industrialization that the Soviet state effected massive

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[2] When the Bolsheviks came to power they recognized ethnonyms, or peoples' national self-identifications, for all nations. Prior to this Evenkis had been broadly grouped and referred to as Tungus.

changes in the Evenkis' system of travel. In this era they implemented a modern program of transportation corridors that I characterize as the Soviet system of mechanized travel.

The account of the post-Soviet period, explored in the fifth chapter, is derived from my own field work in the Ilimpii county of the Evenki Autonomous District and the neighbouring Olenek District in Sakha (Yakutiia). After three decades of mechanization and industrial modernization in the rural economy of east-central Siberia, modern mechanized transport systems have become critically incapable of serving rural populations. The withdrawal of state subsidies after 1991 has left the shells of modern technology in rusted heaps on the edge of town, in people's yards, along river banks, and dotted through the taiga; or, in the case of reindeer, scattered amongst the wild herds. I refer to this era as one whereby the Evenkis came to be de-mobilized due to general technological dysfunction. Reindeer and the associated equipment and techniques for transportation and travel, used by Evenkis long before the arrival of Europeans in central Siberia, continue to be effective means of mobility on the taiga but tend towards an incommensurability with Soviet geographies of centralized rural settlements and vast taiga expanses. That is, the technology of reindeer mobility is often not compatible with the settlement as a technological system and vice versa. I will explore the problem of gaining access to reindeer transport and the general failure of reindeer mobility to replace unreliable and dysfunctional systems of mechanized transport in the context of centralized villages and systems of redistribution.

The displacement of the Evenki system of paths for the Soviet system of mechanized travel has made social well-being contingent, or dependent, on access to mechanical vehicles. Many problems faced by Evenkis today are exacerbated not only

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[3] B.O. Dolgikh highlighted the 'Khatanga Trakt' as a site for intensive cultural interaction which, he held, melded the Evenki and Yakut ethnicities to form the Dolgan people (Anderson 2000a: 86).

by crippled vehicles, but other modern artifacts as well, like settlements, cities, heating and electrical systems, and roads. It can be argued, for example, that the design of a settlement, an artifact of the Soviet era, is poorly suited to provide for the needs of rural Evenkis in the post-Soviet era. That is, the settlements were designed to function with the redistributive inputs of fuel and subsidies associated with Soviet socialism and fail to work in their absence. In other words, Soviet settlements in rural Siberia are de-localized (Pelto 1973) technological systems. All of the artifacts of socialism are now precariously situated because of their dependence upon transfer payments, subsidies, and centralized bureaucracies. The post-Soviet landscape is littered with crippled devices of industrial manufacture, confounding the possibility for rural Evenkis to develop healthy communities.

An understanding of the predicament of those living in daily isolation from state subsidies and services requires the elucidation of the relations between regimes of authority and marginalization. My exploration of Evenki ethnography follows shifting travel practices to illuminate the centralized technological systems and devices that characterize relations between representatives of the state and some of its most marginalized subjects. Using a broad literature review of both Russian and English sources in conjunction with nearly a year of field work in Yakutiia and Evenkiia I represent and analyze the situation of rural Evenkis at the end of the twentieth century. Through long periods of living with, talking to, and informally interviewing Evenki herders, hunters, administrators, and others in Russian I offer insight into the changes that have occurred in the post-Soviet era and re-present the shifting and contested landscapes of the east central Siberian taiga. By focusing on travel and movement and the animal and mechanical vehicles associated with them, I highlight the social and technological roots of rural Evenki peoples' marginalization at the end of the twenty-first century. In this way, this research contributes to the emerging body of work on globalism and transnational relations as well as theories of technology.

2. Theoretical approaches to technology and mobility

In recent years, transportation has become a central problem facing remotely located indigenous peoples of northern Siberia in the Russian Federation. The movement of country foods, for example, from remote locales into urban centres has decreased significantly in the past decade. While goods leaving remote villages for urban markets have suffered from dysfunctional supply lines, the infrequent movement of goods in the direction of rural settlements is even more critical. The majority of Evenkis in the most remote villages suffer from dramatically reduced opportunities for leaving these places or contacting family and friends in other towns and regional centres. Following dramatic cutbacks in federal funding to rural areas, remote settlements are suffering from acute shortages of food, medicine, and fuel (among other things). The decline in subsidies for rural transport is seen in the realm of scholarly research as well, where the rising cost of fuel in the immediate post-Soviet environment has altered the nature of academic field work. At the present time, most researchers are no longer able to command special flights to field sites but, rather, are forced to hitchhike on whatever means are available to get them where they are headed (Fondahl 1998: xi). This situation has lead to a severe under-representation of academic work from remote areas.

To a great extent, the rapid decline in living standards can be understood as an abandonment of northern rural areas by the state. Forced settlement and economic reorganization all took place in the middle of the Soviet era and were completed under the conditions of subsidized transport. The spatial logic of socialist settlements can be seen as the physical embodiment of explicitly Soviet forms of mobility and governance. That is, it is a landscape engineered under Soviet authority. As an element of this landscape, remote settlements were constructed as subsidized outposts of industrial development. The subsidies provided essential materials for living, including food, medicine, and fuel. To meet these needs, snowmachines, all-terrain tracked vehicles, trucks, motorboats, helicopters, and airplanes were imported. All of these are complex, de-localized machines requiring extensive networks of financial and technical support. Older local forms of transport such as reindeer saddle and sleigh are still used but are not able to satisfy the needs of large concentrated settlements and are even hard pressed to meet those of smaller ones. Reindeer can transport a single hunter or a slaughtered caribou, however, they can not transport the quantities of medicine, food, and fuel needed to feed a Soviet village.

Given the current crises in rural Siberia, the endurance of Evenki cultural practices in the late-capitalist world may be cast as a necessary resurgence of skills and techniques, of ways of relating to the world. These practices are evident in the manner in which Evenkis travel as well as in their interactions with each other, settlers, foreigners, the land, and the wild and domestic reindeer that are central to life in the Siberian taiga. Equally, the federal state has developed its own systems of travel based on highly centralized bureaucratic structures. Both systems—though they cannot always be delineated in such a conveniently simplistic manner—are contingent on particular cultural logics. The state's practices are generally tied to a modern industrialism that envisions a wholly economic landscape. This is a landscape which is imagined to be open for development and in need of extensive networks of transportation for the transformation and movement of natural and human resources.[4] Evenki cultural logic, somewhat more tenuously stated, follows long traditions of travelling through and dwelling in the taiga in a pattern of seasonal rounds and mixed economic activities. This travel and dwelling is manifest today as extensive social relations maintained, in part, through visiting as well as cash and commodity remittances. This division between

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[4] For an example of this modern industrialist vision, see Symons (1985).

Evenki movement and a state-formulated transport system is further complicated by the access, maintenance, and use of vehicles. Evenki people's movement choices interact with a spectrum of devices that range from kayaks and reindeer sleighs to snowmobiles, motorboats, and helicopters. To the degree possible, mechanized vehicles have been incorporated into the Evenki system of paths.

Nonetheless, the general displacement of the Evenki system of paths by the Soviet system of mechanized travel through the Soviet era changed the movement patterns of rural Evenkis. Prior to Soviet industrialization Evenkis travelled extensively through central Siberia using locally available vehicles—reindeer—to propel them along well-used paths. Mechanized travel, implemented through the modern socialist state, introduced rapid de-localized transport options, facilitating distanced social relations across the USSR and, in some instances, beyond. People from all corners of the Soviet Union were mobilized by state-supported programs of development and transport subsidy.[5] In contrast, a radical *de-mobilization* of rural Evenkis has occurred as a direct result of market reforms in the early post-Soviet era.

To the casual observer it would appear that the remote regions of Siberia had experienced a number of apparently progressive changes in technology that have recently regressed to such an extent as to enforce a return to 'primitive' networks of transportation. This technological degeneration is suggested in the works of Pika (1999), Fondahl (1998), and Krupnik (1998). Conceptualized as a move from the stone age to the space age, the social progress of the indigenous peoples of Siberia was celebrated in the Soviet Union as a success of state socialism. Social progress was graphically portrayed in the design, production, and distribution of modern transport machinery. A closer look will show, however, that technological devices are improperly valued if they are judged according to degrees of mechanical sophistication and performance. Complex de-localized machines and systems in east-central Siberia, far from being the acme of success, are reliant on fragile networks of subsidy. Clearly 'technological regression' is not so easily measured.

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[5] See, for example, Rytkheu's novella, *From nomad tent to university* (1980).

Under Soviet development and industrialization, vehicles as technological devices came to symbolically define much of the social environment. In a different but analogous context, Andrew Feenberg describes this social environment, as one which includes "urban and built spaces, work places, medical activities and expectations, life patterns, and so on" (1995:16). Similarly, technological devices and systems in this paper refer not only to the machine-powered vehicles introduced in the twentieth century and the ever important handcrafted boats, saddles, and sleighs which characterize traditional Evenki mobility, but also the built environment which includes roads, cities, and settlements. An extension of this definition holds that "technical relations are embedded in social relations, and can only be understood within this relational matrix, as one aspect of human sociality" (Ingold 1997: 107). Technology, then, flows from technique and solidly locates artifacts within worlds of social meaning.

In recent years the growing social-cultural anthropological interest in technology has not been particularly concerned with the socio-cultural phenomena of travel technology. While some anthropologists have written about technology in the last decade (Ridington 1999, 1994, 1983; Pfaffenberger 1992; Lemonnier 1993; Ingold 1997; Escobar 1994), few mention the instruments and techniques of mobility. Significant exceptions include Tim Ingold and Terhi Kurttila's "Perceiving the Environment in Finnish Lapland" (2000), Quilici-Pacaud's examination of aircraft technology (1993), and Igor Kopytoff's note on the automobile in *The Social Life of Things* (1986). In contrast, by considering not only Evenki people's relationships with one another, but also with the technological devices that enable movement across the land, I show how vehicles are important conduits and symbols for social relations. An understanding of the *means of travel* in this context provides for a finer exploration of Evenki culture within the complex and shifting social landscape of the Evenki Autonomous District.

Just as anthropologists of technology have scarcely explored the use of vehicles in their research, ethnographers have been reluctant to express the social relations of travel in relation to material culture. The literature on nomadic peoples, as well as the more recent body of writing concerning travel in the late twentieth century, have little to say regarding the social meanings surrounding technologies of mobility (Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson 1980; Barfield 1993; Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1997). In addition, recent post-modern ethnographies treat travel as one lever by which scholars can deconstruct the traditional boundaries of culture (Clifford 1997; Appadurai 1996). Perhaps in reaction to an older British functionalism that over-emphasized the boundedness of culture, post-modern theorists have been particularly interested in the boundlessness of cultures in the late twentieth century.[6] Despite this interest in mobility and diaspora, the actual means of travel, or technologies of travel, have hardly been considered in these major theoretical works.

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[6] For a critique of British Functionalism, cf Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson 1980: 16; Stocking 1984.

2.1. Technology, technique, and the performance of mobility

Anthropologists and other theorists of technology propose a broad array of definitions for technology that reside outside of the vernacular usage. On one end of a definitional spectrum, technology has been used synonymously with human social organization. This use of technology, which is evident in the work of Michel Foucault (1980) and Donna Haraway (1991), for example, takes its meaning from all things engineered by humans and follows a Continental tradition of critical theory that is as concerned with techniques as it is with technologies.[7] In this tradition Foucault writes, for example, of the "techniques of the government of society" (1980: 239) and the "techniques of power" invested in certain professions (1980: 248). His use of technologies and techniques is critical of the use of the term technology in contemporary scholarship;

> one thinks of hard technology, the technology of wood, of fire, of electricity. Whereas government is also a function of technology: the government of individuals, the government of souls, the government of the self by the self . . . and so on. [Foucault 1980: 256]

In other places, Foucault goes as far as suggesting the near total irrelevance of artifacts in the determination of practice (ibid.). He states instead, in the context of the liberating potential of architecture, that "it can and does produce positive effects when the liberating intentions of the architect coincide with the real practice of people in the exercise of freedom" but that "there are no machines of freedom, by definition" (ibid.: 246,247). In other words, without the social, the technical has no meaning. Leo Marx (1994), a prominent theorist of technology, remarks on the post-modern turn in thinking about technology, within which he soundly locates Foucault. He writes that post-modernist thought, which tends to propound "the idea of the domination of life by large technological systems", has added to an increasingly muddied boundary between "what traditionally had been considered 'technology,' . . . and the other socio-economic and cultural components of these large complex systems" (Marx 1994: 257). This recently broadened definition of technology which includes social organizations as well as political structures is ultimately too general for my project, but nonetheless points to the importance of a de-materialized interpretation of technology.

A more conservative reading considers technology to be the confluence of human organization with material culture. Andrew Feenberg defines it in the following way: "Technology is an elaborate complex of related activities that crystallizes around tool-making and -using in every society" (1995: 18). Such a limited definition provides theoretical ground for the examination of the vehicles which provide mobility in east-central Siberia without becoming bogged down in the details of the debate. Nonetheless, for the time being, it is useful to balance materialized and de-materialized approaches to the theory of technology. Vehicles—like reindeer, sleighs, saddles, snowmobiles, and motorboats, for instance—are best understood as performances meaningfully related to other aspects of their performers' lives. In other words, it is constructive to see the value of things as the material aspects of complex social systems. Ridington writes, "the root of the word [technology], *techne*, refers to something closer to technique or performance. Technology is thus a form of artifice, not the artifacts that are its products" (1994: 273). Nonetheless, the artifacts or the products of technique are clearly not irrelevant.

The performative character of technology is important in the consideration of Evenki mobility in Siberia because it focuses attention on human actors rather than technological systems. If mobility is a central issue of concern then a study limited to the examination of the technical specifications of the sleighs employed in winter travel will miss a

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[7] Marcel Mauss presents a compelling essay concerning technique in "Techniques of the body"

significant part of the performance of sleigh mobility. To really understand the issues of mobility on the taiga, to begin to acknowledge an Evenki system of travel, technology must be read as more than the device itself and understood in conjunction with the performance of human actors. Among reindeer herders, for example, a typical skill gained by apprentices is the construction of wooden sleighs.

In Anderson's doctoral dissertation, he describes the process of choosing the appropriate tree that will yield a good runner: "The tamarack that is selected for sled runners should be without twists and knots but also should be growing on a slight incline giving it slight arc with respect to the ground" (1995a: 175). Anderson relates this information as part of a larger example of the production of identity among Evenki herders. In this instance, knowing the land is integral to the identity of the Evenkis who live and work in the taiga. It is an identity that is tied to Evenkis' sense of both dwelling in the land and belonging to it. Anderson shows how the production of material culture is a performative aspect of Evenki social relations. He writes that during his "apprenticeship, it was pointed out that while there may not be a correct way to do things there were many wrong ways of acting which revealed that one did not 'know' " (1995a: 172). Knowing the land is highly valued by Evenki hunters and herders. Successful mobility on the taiga requires a complex knowledge of both the means of conveyance and the specific landscape traversed. But hunters do not simply require a vehicle to navigate the taiga. To travel on the land, a hunter needs to enter into a relationship with his vehicle as well as the natural and social environment in which he operates.

In the colonial encounter and, especially, through the Soviet era of industrialization, Evenki people were subjected to the imposing cultural logic of the Russian and Soviet states. Soviet thought can be characterized as a technocratic approach

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(1973).

to governance and management. In his evaluation of the doctrine of technocratic rationalization, Feenberg writes that

> [t]echnical progress appears to follow a unilinear course, a fixed track, from less to more advanced configurations. Although this conclusion seems obvious from a backward glance at the development of any familiar technical object, in fact it is based on two claims of unequal plausibility: first, that technical progress proceeds from lower to higher levels of development; and second, that that development follows a single sequence of necessary stages. [1995:6]

The tyranny of this vision, claims Feenberg, is tied to an historically situated mode of thought linked to the rise of modernity in the Western world (ibid.). The Soviet government, which spawned its own socialist form of technocratic rationale, clearly supported the belief in the superiority of complex machines over 'simple' and 'primitive' non-mechanical things. The anthropologist Bryan Pfaffenberger, cautions, however, that

> [w]here technological change has apparently disrupted so-called 'traditional societies,' the villain is much more likely to be colonialism than technology. Colonialism disrupts indigenous political, legal, and ritual systems, and in so doing, may seriously degrade the capacity of local system-builders to function effectively within indigenous activity systems. [Pfaffenberger 1992:512]

My own thesis, that Evenki mobility has been jeopardized as a result of both social and technological systems, treads a fine line between technological and social determinism. There are dysfunctional technological artifacts that are an essential part of Evenkis' present situation of marginalization and de-mobilization. In the following chapter I show why and how these technologies are dysfunctional by using Pelto's idea of de-localization. De-localized technological devices and systems in east-central Siberia are remarkably tenacious even if their background networks are not. The ramifications of this tenacity result in unstable technological landscapes.

2.2. De-localization and the fragility of northern mechanization

De-localization and the fragility of northern mechanization is a byproduct of Soviet modernization and development. As a byproduct of Soviet modernization and development it can also be characterized as a situation of delicate contingency on de-localized technological devices and systems. The idiom of localized and de-localized technologies is one developed by Pertti J. Pelto in *The Snowmobile Revolution* (1973). He writes that de-localization, as "a large number of interrelated processes . . . [is] best understood in terms of a very generalized loss of local autonomy through the growth of dependence on a worldwide system of resource allocation and political power" (ibid: 166). Elsewhere he defines de-localization "as the tendency for any territorially defined population to become increasingly dependent on resources, information flow and socioeconomic linkages with the systems of energy and resources outside their particular area" (1975: 31). Expanding on Pelto's work I have tied de-localization to a concept that I develop throughout this thesis: the fragility of mechanized transport in the North. The situation of crisis in rural Siberia is particularly critical because of the heightened fragility of inter-regional transport systems in the post-Soviet era. The degree of de-localization effected in Siberia under regimes of Soviet development have left very few places untouched and has resulted in an expansive socialist landscape that fails to operate under market conditions.

This idea of de-localization resonates with Langdon Winner's remark that "[h]ighly developed complex technologies are tools without handles or, at least, with handles of extremely remote access" (1977:202). This issue of remote access is precisely that which makes the idiom of de-localization so powerful. It is also why Pelto identified de-localization as the "major process underlying all or most of the variety of forms we commonly label 'modernization,' 'acculturation,' and related transformations" (1975:

32). While Pelto supports his discussion of de-localization with examples from a capitalist market system, my work explores similar outcomes under the socialist economy of the Soviet Union. I refer to the process of de-localization in east-central Siberia as one that resulted in social marginalization due, in part, to the ongoing tenacity of Soviet era technological devices and systems. Thus, I am using the term "de-localization" to describe the specific process whereby remote Siberian settlements became dependent on machines and bureaucracies that are functionally dependent on the non-local input of resources.

De-localization describes a parallel process to mechanization. I am cautious, however, not to entirely overlap the two because of the potential for de-localization to describe social organization and non-mechanized objects as well as machines. So, not only are helicopters de-localized but so are systems of governance. While many objects and devices may be of a local character (like snares, saddles, and even reindeer) complex machines are almost always de-localized. This is so because machines have dispersed locales of production and consumption — they have geographically extensive biographies. If a helicopter were truly localized then its many components, from the specialization of labour and training of staff to the fabrication of parts and the refining of fuel, would have to be compacted in a much smaller geographic area: shortening the divide between production and consumption of the object. In the Arctic, this is clearly not an option.

Care must be taken not to confuse the processes of localization and de-localization with deterministic claims of technological hegemony. Such hegemony is described as the process whereby a technological artifact, which has been transferred from one culture to another, becomes a determining factor in social change. Feenberg has responded to this problem by considering hegemonic and subversive interpretations of machines.[8] This is an issue to which I will return shortly. The character of complex modern machines is that they are functionally reliant on extensive (de-localized) networks. To point to this reliance, however, is not to claim that the machines are perceived of and used in homogeneous ways or even that they are the driving factors in social change. De-localized machines, after all, may be used in very 'local' ways that ultimately have little impact on the reduction of their de-localized character. As with Winner's (1977) quote about the remote handles of complex technological systems, I see de-localization as more about the distancing of social relations through vast networks of exchange and expertise than about the location and dislocation of interpretive control.

In the 1960s, when the Soviet government established industrial herding practices, the traditional herding practices of Evenkis (along with those of other indigenous peoples) were displaced. Could Soviet ranching be considered a de-localized technology? In many ways it is a de-localized technology but one that is surely of a different order than that of machines. While Soviet ranching requires heavy inputs of external resources to manage the large herds and the failure of these inputs might render the system dysfunctional, it would not necessarily render the reindeer dysfunctional. In reality, this seems to have been the case for many Evenki reindeer herds after they were privatized. The herds may have been too large for smaller groups of herders to manage and there may have been a loss of many reindeer, but there has not occurred the same degree of dysfunction as is the case with machines. Helicopters, again, without inputs of fuel and parts and expert labour, become inaccessible objects. Indeed, helicopters could be stripped and transformed into other things (like shelter, or parts for other machines) but then they would cease to be helicopters.

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[8] What Feenberg calls subversive rationalization (1995).

An issue related to de-localization is de-skilling. While the idea of de-skilling was developed in relation to factory labour (Fleron 1977), it also works in the context of rural Evenkiia. De-skilling is the process whereby machines replace skilled labour. As with de-localization, it results in marginalization and a general loss of autonomy and power. An example of de-skilling in east-central Siberia is when Evenki hunters lose valuable skills associated with reindeer travel because they have become accustomed to the use of snowmobiles. In the event of technological dysfunction, which I will discuss presently, one of the results of de-skilling is the hunters' lack of ability to competently traverse the taiga without recourse to machine conveyance.

De-localization is perhaps not a problem in places where networks of distribution and exchange are resilient. More southerly and central locales, for example, may suffer from even greater de-localization than remote northern settlements but the difference is that their transport systems are far more extensive and resilient to crisis. The road systems in east-central Siberia are exceedingly treacherous and are only traversable for less than six months out of the year. The cheapest forms of long-distance transport are provided by the river systems. Like the northern winter roads, these rivers cannot offer constant or even reliable routes for the movement of goods. It is by these standards that I claim that the transport corridors of east-central Siberia are essentially fragile. Fragility in this case is a result of the limited number of transport corridors as well as their relative susceptibility to uncontrollable factors such as late frosts, early thaws, hazardous rapids, and rising fuel costs. A fragility of distribution networks mixed with extensive de-localization has led to general technological dysfunction and the de-mobilization of rural Evenkis.

2.3. The device paradigm and technological dysfunction

Albert Borgmann's writings on the philosophy of technology provide additional insight into the character of machines and technological systems. Thus far I have maintained the position that it is worth talking about vehicles and the artifacts of sedentism (settlements, airstrips, roads) as technological devices. Borgmann(1984) presents an approach to social activities and technological artifacts called the device paradigm. Under the logic of the device paradigm, objects, identified as devices (which are socially divisive) replace *things* which can be identified as socially cohesive. According to the device paradigm, things do not offer commodities but rather focal engagement and social community (referred to by Borgmann as 'commanding presence' and 'centering power'). Devices, on the other hand, essentialize certain aspects of focal things and deliver a particular commodity. In the device paradigm, a commodity is the visible point of engagement between people and devices in the act of consumption. That is, a device has a commodity (say, mobility) and that commodity is not the whole device but rather a part or, as Borgmann writes, the foreground of the device. The commodius engagement with a device tends to veil an unseen background. The background, also referred to as the machinery of the device, fits well with Pelto's(1973) theory of de-localization and Winner's (1977) characterization of remote handles for complex tools: all of these point to a dislocation of power and the general inability to act upon (or even see) the many loci of production and distribution that enable modern technology.

'Focal things' are central to the device paradigm and while Borgmann's discussion of 'focal things' is evocative in North America, it would be imprudent to assume, without the ethnographic work, that 'focal things' are an appropriate vehicle for understanding Evenki practices. I think Borgmann's device paradigm can be used (or manipulated) to help talk about the growth of dependence on socialist systems of redistribution and organization without recourse to a discussion of focal practice.

The actual artifacts of Soviet socialism, the devices like snowmobiles, helicopters, and motor boats, prove to be of very little use when they are separated from their background machinery. Or, as Pelto might have characterized it, when the supportive networks that enable the operation of de-localized machines are severed, those machines cease to be useful. The mechanized vehicles of Soviet modernization are de-localized devices which provide a commodity: rapid mobility. In Siberia, (and the North in general) the supportive networks are fragile due to their relatively scattered and scant presence in the vast taiga and tundra landscapes. In the Soviet era, centralized and consolidated settlements were erected and extensive networks of mechanized transport built to support these settlements. In the post-Soviet era, economic crisis has led to the erosion of the supportive networks that enabled de-localized devices to operate in Siberia. While many of the institutions of socialism have eroded, the artifacts of socialism have not. However, these artifacts, divested of their supportive networks (background/machinery) are shown to be ineffective.

Technological dysfunction is a byproduct that results from the dislocation of the background and the foreground of the device. Thus, when there is no longer a machinery for the commodity, the commodity loses its commodiousness and the machinery of the device is brought into glaring focus. In terms of east-central Siberia, motors for motor boats will provide a good example of this process. The motor on a boat provides rapid mobility in the spring, summer, and fall when there is no ice blocking river travel. According to Borgmann, this mobility could be considered the foreground or commodity of the device, the motor. The background or machinery of the motor could be traced along a number of social connections and networks. Fundamentally, though, the motor is a number of interdependent parts that work together when fueled by a mix of gasoline and oil. Each of the parts of the motor, along with the petroleum products, are imported from the territorial centre, Krasnoiarsk, several thousand kilometres away. But these resources do not originate in Krasnoiarsk. In fact, the motors are assembled elsewhere and, more likely than not, the parts for those motors are assembled in an even more disparate group of locales. The motor is a relatively simple machine and so the distancing character of the labour may not be so great. There are many people in rural settlements with the ability and/or training to fix boat motors, given the right tools and parts. When major components of the machine are unavailable there occurs a situation of technological dysfunction. The motor without fuel cannot turn over and can no longer provide the commodity of rapid river mobility. The opportunity to improvise exists but is narrowed by the sensitivity and degree of specialization resident in the machine and the parts. Thus, a fractured rotor or a lost spark plug will prevent the operation of the motor. These are parts (devices in their own right) that cannot be manufactured in remote villages. The motor then ceases to propel the boat and becomes marked by its dysfunction.

Technological dysfunction has become a broadly epidemic-like crisis in east-central Siberia. The disturbing materialization of the background machinery that once supported Soviet Evenkiia demands careful analysis. Now that the tools are in place to generalize the character of technological artifacts in Siberia, it is necessary to offer a particularizing model. Such a model is meant to acknowledge the historical conditions that have given rise to the de-mobilization of Evenkis in the post-Soviet era.

2.4. Social biography of things and de-mobilization

The relationship between people and the vehicles that provide mobility through the taiga can be explained through the construction of artifactual biographies. The biographical approach, introduced by Igor Kopytoff (1986), makes no explicit reference to technology or theories of technology but engages, nonetheless, the same issues. Kopytoff's approach is through an economic anthropology that takes commodities as its central reference point. The biographical method of examining the careers of individual objects in order to illuminate areas of social life is directly relevant to this project. In my study, I have attempted to lay out the material conditions of mobility through the examination of the vehicles themselves, and how they come to be used, or not used, in daily life on the central Siberian plateau.

Kopytoff's (1986) biographical approach to material culture is a clear methodological statement that demonstrates how we might locate artifacts within biographies of social meaning. He writes that a "culturally informed . . . biography of an object would look at it as a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories" (Kopytoff 1986: 68). As such, a vehicle, a road, or even a town, as built objects and systems, are understood not in and of themselves, but as things situated within matrices of social action and meaning. To dematerialize my argument about dependency and the hegemony of technological systems, we might look at the winter road that links the various settlements of Evenkia to the district centre. Such an examination would show who travels the road, who built it, who maintains it, and how it operates within realms of human sociality. Similarly, motorboats, reindeer, and aircraft can be explored not only for the function they provide but also their role in the social landscape, their place in the production of Evenki culture. One of Kopytoff's more compelling and appropriate examples follows:

> The biography of a car in Africa would reveal a wealth of cultural data: the way it was acquired, how and from whom the money was assembled to pay for it, the relationship of the seller to the buyer, the uses to which the car is regularly put, the identity of its most frequent passengers and of those who borrow it, the frequency of borrowing, the movement of the car from hand to hand over the years, and in the end, when the car collapses, the final disposition of its remains. [Kopytoff 1986: 67]

Although it has not been possible to produce such a biography within the scope of this paper, this method leads to an important theoretical position that applies to the general thesis of Evenki marginalization and de-mobilization: the technological devices and systems that I am confronting are historically and politically situated. That is, helicopters, motorboats, winter roads, and shipping routes are located within realms of human sociality in the same way as are people, reindeer, hand-carved canoes, and snowshoes. They are owned, controlled, disputed, stolen, traded, and destroyed. While I have noted the difference in their character by way of de-localization, each artifact and each technological system exists within people's lived experience. The strength of the biographical approach is that it de-essentializes things that are typically and easily essentialized. For this reason I refuse to talk about The Motorboat or The Helicopter as quintessential non-situated categories.

De-mobilization in east-central Siberia is a phenomenon that flows out of the technological dysfunction of vehicles and transport systems. Following the biographical technique of evaluating social relations in relation to the life history of things, I explain de-mobilization as the dislocation of Evenkis from the means of travel. This dislocation is seen in the failure of the territorial and district transport systems to provide transport, the failure of vehicles to provide mobility, and the failure of the built environment of settlements and centres to accommodate the loss of mobility. As will be elaborated in this work, de-localization in Siberia is linked to the loss of local autonomy which arose under Soviet centralization and modernization. The loss of autonomy led to marginalization and impoverishment only in the post-Soviet era, when the redistributive economy was upset by the introduction of the market system and the deep economic crises which followed. The failure of technological systems, or the phenomenon of technological dysfunction, explained through Borgmann's device paradigm, has narrowed the possibility for remote Evenkis to appropriate the means of conveyance on their own terms.

2.5. Interpretive flexibility and technological determinism

The idea that artifacts are not determinative of either social relations or social change is important to this study because I present a situation whereby devices have been transferred from one society to another. My claim is that this transfer, along with the uneven relations of colonialism, has been central in determining the current impoverishment and marginalization of rural Evenkis. I argue for a soft determinism[9] that refutes the claim that all change is socially determined. Fleron (1977) put forward a similar position which he termed the mediation theory of technology. It holds that devices do carry agency but that they cannot be understood outside of their social context. Fleron writes that the mediation theory posits that "technology as one of the artifacts of culture embodies the dominant values contained in that culture" (1977: 472). In this section I explain my approach to the transfer of technology from one society to another as residing in a middle ground between social and technological determinism.

According to Hughes, Pinch, and Bijker, there is "flexibility in how people think of or interpret artifacts" (1987: 40). To this they give the term 'interpretive flexibility'. From less complex devices, like rifles, to highly complex ones, like helicopters, there is no template for the way in which they will be adopted by any given community of people. That there exists flexibility in the interpretation of things is a point noted by many scholars, including Escobar who agrees that "different actors . . . interpret technological artifacts in different ways" (1994: 212). Advocating his biographical approach to things, Kopytoff writes:

> [I]n situations of culture contact, . . . [biographies of things] can show what anthropologists have so often stressed: that what is significant about the adoption of alien objects—as of alien ideas—is not the fact that they are

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[9] Smith and Marx suggest a spectrum that accommodates a variety of technologically deterministic paradigms that account for historical change (1994).

> adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use. [Kopytoff 1986: 67]

What is also significant, however, is the way alien objects can be inflexible, refusing redefinition and subversive uses. In Evenkiia, Evenkis have not necessarily used artifacts, like vehicles, in the same way that Russians do, or according to the plans encouraged and enforced by Soviet authorities. Alternatively, some things resist co-optation and subversion. The idea of interpretive flexibility is elaborated by Feenberg (1995) in his discussion of hegemonic and subversive rationalizations.

In Feenberg's account, the technological device is not only a tool, weapon, or lever in power relations but also has some drive of its own. This agency arises out of a process whereby the technical rationality of any given society is "effectively incorporated into the structure of machines" (Feenberg 1995: 11). Or, in other words, "machine design mirrors back the social factors operative in the prevailing rationality" (ibid.). Technological devices do have a role in determining the way in which they are used by any particular society. Thus motorboats may fit into an Evenki cultural repertoire but they may also engender a set of relations more similar to that of the Europeans who made them. In addition, because they are de-localized, machines engender an ongoing relation of dependence on external sources of energy and resources. The potential for machines to be used creatively or subversively is clearly limited under conditions of technological dysfunction. Following Pelto's (1973) spectrum of localized and de-localized technologies, as the degree of contingency on external networks increases, technological devices become more susceptible to systemic failure. Remote communities are particularly vulnerable because the conditions of their contingency are compounded by geographical distance and systemic fragility.

2.6. Evenki system of paths and the Soviet system of mechanized travel

Developing an approach to an ethnography of travel is one impressive outcome of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's (1993) *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an Out-of-the-Way Place*, an ethnography concerned with the Meratus peoples of Indonesia. With a goal of challenging anthropology's traditional practice of studying villages, Tsing was forced by the circumstances of Meratus peoples' travels to consider the implications of non-stable field work sites. She writes:

> As I involved myself with a network that stretched across the mountains, I moved increasingly further from structural models of local stability and came to recognize the open-ended dialogues that formed and reformed Meratus culture and history. My own shifting positioning made me especially alert to continual negotiations of local 'community,' to the importance of far-flung as well as local ties, and to the array of local responses to regional challenges and dilemmas. Moreover, a culture that cannot be tied to a place cannot be analytically stopped in time. As I observed communities in flux, it became difficult to avoid the fact that local agreements about custom, ritual, language, and livelihood were also open for renegotiation. [Tsing 1993: 66]

It may seem ironic to be exploring ethnographies of travel in the context of de-mobilized Evenkis but, as I will show in the following chapters, the current situation of de-mobilization is far from typical. The elements of an ethnography of travel might include social practices of mobility through time, the relationship of people to the vehicles used in travel, and the relationship of people to the socio-ecological landscape through which they traverse. Following Tsing's challenge to more functionalist projects of ethnographic inquiry, Evenki identities, actions, and practices must be similarly, though carefully, extracted from the de-localized landscapes of the modern, Soviet-built environment.

The roads of machine conveyance implemented in the latter half of the Soviet era were preceded by the Evenki system of paths. These two systems of mobility are the terms on which Evenkis must now negotiate travel in east-central Siberia. The Evenki system of paths is an idea borrowed from Shirokogoroff's description of 'Tungus' modes of travel:

> The Tungus roads are made with quite concrete aims, namely, to reach certain points, e.g. the hunting region, the pasturage for reindeer . . . the best localities for the campment etc. . . . So, in nomadism the system of roads is created in the same manner as that of the railway which is cut into sections with stations, where the fuel and water may be supplied and the servants changed (in the Tungus conditions they take a rest); the roads are adapted to the least loss of energy of the animals and men. Yet, this system is also correlated with the needs of hunting and others . . . When one is familiar with the actual conditions one may see that this system is the best one in the given conditions and it shows that the Tungus are very keen observers. . . [1935: 87]

In this passage Shirokogoroff advances an argument of cultural relativity to his early-twentieth-century audience. His comparison juxtaposes modern systems of mechanized travel with a 'Tungus' system of paths. The Tungus system of paths, as it is described by Shirokogoroff, is similar to what English speaking Canadians might, today, call a network of trails. I make a case, however, for the interpretation this system of paths as something more than simply a jumble of routes through the forest. Heonik Kwon, an anthropologist who has done field work in the Russian Far East with reindeer herders who speak a language related to Evenki, describes an experience of the taiga landscape that is analogous to that described by my informants in central Siberia. In Orochon thought, Kwon writes, "animals populate the natural territory and mark it by their paths of motion" (1993: 62). This observation is also similar to those made by Hugh Brody (1981) and Robin Ridington (1988;1990), anthropologists who have studied the lifeways of sub-Arctic Dene people in western Canada. Ridington and Brody both report a strong Dene body of thought concerned with the intertwining trails of hunters and animals as well as the metaphysical paths of humans through life. DeLaby (1977), who studied Shamanism in Siberia, entitles one French language article: "Routes and trails of the Spirits among the Tungus," showing similar attention to otherworldly mobility.

For these highly mobile hunters of the sub-Arctic, the forest is crisscrossed with paths of history, meaning, and destiny. The Dunne-za Dene of north-eastern British Columbia consider paths or trails to exist in the world of daily life as well as the world experienced while dreaming:

> [I]n Dunne-za thought a hunt can be completed only after the hunter has negotiated a relationship with his game in a dream, an animal will come to a snare only after such a negotiation has taken place. The hunter's skill lies in his reading of the landscape in relation to his dream encounter with the animal. [Ridington 1999: 182]

Anderson's work with a reindeer herding brigade in the Taimyr resonates with this notion of paths, as well. He writes that "[k]nowing the land and its human and animal persons provided both the mechanism and the demand to travel without recourse to an agenda of property or territoriality"(1995a: 201). 'Dreaming' for the Dunne-za and 'knowing' for the Taimyr Evenkis are part of dwelling in a landscape that is considered to be more or less sentient. This sentience has been noted by Anderson (2000a), who coined the term 'sentient ecology' in reference to an ecology with agency, that is, one which is responsive to human actions. Both the Dunne-za and the Evenkis have elaborate social engagements with the land and thus do not move about through space opportunistically searching for game. Rather, they interact with a landscape that is responsive to their actions; one which is storied in the sense that it has been lived in by humans and is marked by their sustained presence.

With its inclusive moral agenda, the Soviet state's attempt to create a landscape of stability, settlement, and 'rational' mobility, was ultimately overlaid atop this thriving and 'storied' geography of Evenki experience and knowledge. The language of Soviet scholarship was generally hostile and derisive toward Evenki practices. One Soviet biologist in pre-Revolutionary Russia writes that among Siberian herders,

> Land management and surveys for rational use of reindeer pastures were unknown. Pastures were utilized chaotically, in a fashion which resulted, almost

> every year, in cases of fodder shortage during winter. No measures were taken against bloodsucking flies and gadflies. All this caused exhaustion, diseases and a massive-scale loss among the reindeer. The number of reindeer perishing annually was equal to the yearly population growth. As a result reindeer raising in pre-Revolutionary Russia did not develop and declined from year to year. [Zhigunov 1968: 3]

Zhigunov's fable of irrational reindeer herding practices is used as a foil for his discipline of modern zoology and scientific resource management. His is representative of the ideology behind the modern Soviet system of mechanized travel. The replacement of 'backward' and 'chaotic' herding practices by 'rational' and 'progressive' range management resulted in a radical alteration of Evenki peoples' mobility on the taiga. But how exactly is this besieged program of mobility practices characterized?

The Evenkis of east-central Siberia are not unique in their nomadic mobility practices. Indeed, the discipline of anthropology has been concerned with nomadism for a long time and a useful analogy can be drawn from the nomadic Basseri people of Persia or Iran. Frederik Barth, one of the foremost anthropologists to have written on nomadism, describes the mobility of the Basseri in the following way: The Basseri's "salient nomadic experience makes territory the scene of *movement*, not a field for the demarcation of plots" (Barth 2000: 19). In other words, the social landscape of the Basseri is better understood as one within which they travel rather than one which is defined by staid territorial boundaries. If Barth's point can be generalized, there is an important difference in worldview between settled and nomadic people. In other words, the system of paths for nomads may be a more useful framework than that of territories and set boundaries as they are used to describe settled peoples. The ethnocentrism of Zhigunov's and, by extension, the state's position is analogous to the following passage from Barth's description of the Basseri:

> From a sedentary person's point of view, indeed, their world seemed scattered and disordered, precisely because it appeared unbounded. But it was not disordered: groups hold elaborate and clearly defined grazing rights. However, these grazing rights were conceptualized not as bounded territories, but as

> migration schedules, called *il-rah* i.e. tribal roads. Each such 'road' was composed of rights of pasture and of passage during particular time periods. [Barth 2000: 19]

Just as the Basseri's tribal roads suggest the temporal schema of migration schedules as much as they trace movement on the land, the Evenkis' system of paths is less about actual routes and trails than it is about the social relations that organize mobility within a changing landscape. My adaptation of Shirokogoroff's 'Tungus system of paths' is a useful metaphor which recognizes the existence of very different understandings of territory, place, and practice. I use this ethnographic approach to travel to make sense of current conditions of Evenki impoverishment and marginalization.

3. The Evenkis of east-central Siberia

3.1. Setting the scene

I first arrived on the central Siberian plateau in the most eastern territory of the Ilimpii Evenkis in the autumn of 1996, five years after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It was a time when many people were critical of the governmental shift from state socialism to market capitalism. More disturbing, however, was the striking impoverishment, isolation, and general de-mobilization of rural Evenkis. This situation was even more evident in my second trip to Siberia with my family in 1999. Clearly, after nearly a decade of post-socialist reforms, rural Evenkis were in a dire situation.

In Olenek,[10] a small town of around 2,000 people which is the regional centre for the Olenek county in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutiia), I taught English in the local school and studied Sakha and Russian languages as well as Evenki and Sakha ethnography and ethnohistory. Situated on the Olenek river, across from a smaller settlement called Kharealakh, this regional centre was much like any other remote administrative town in the Siberian Arctic. The majority of jobs were found in governmental sectors and the population was ethnically mixed, in this case with a majority of Sakhas. The regional centre acts as a hub for all administrative affairs in the district. It is the site of an airport large enough for medium-sized regional aircraft, which, in the winter of 1996, arrived several times a week from Yakutsk. Other services provided in Olenek include a hospital and several clinics, a residential school for children from remote villages, schools and nurseries for local children, law courts, and the governor's offices. This settlement, like many others, was founded on the basis of an old Tsarist winter fort. In the mid-1930s I.M. Suslov, the Soviet army officer, surveyor, and amateur ethnographer, helped to establish the basic structures of the town as an outpost for Sovietization. Olenek is currently accessible only by year-round air routes, seasonal river ways, and winter roads which open and are sporadically maintained when the taiga and rivers are frozen enough to support heavy trucking.

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[10] The second 'e' in Olenek is iotised and is pronounced 'Olenyok'. In the Republic of Sakha (Yakutiia), there are no longer any counties. Shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union and the declaration of the Yakut Autonomous Republic as a full Republic, the counties were renamed as 'Uluus', a territorial name in the Sakha language.

Four years after my visit to Olenek I was back on the central Siberian plateau in the Ilimpii county of the Evenki Autonomous District. I lived in this area with my partner and two-year-old daughter for five months in the summer and autumn of 1999. The majority of our time was spent in Tura, with occasional forays into the surrounding taiga and outlying settlements. During our stay in Evenkiia I made three trips to Ekonda, a small settlement populated mostly by Evenkis and considered to be an Evenki 'national' village [*nat'sionalnaia poselka*]. Tura is larger and more ethnically varied than Olenek but shares many of the characteristics of a medium-sized northern Siberian town. It is the location of the district government as well as the county seat for Ilimpii. Tura is home to approximately 6,000 people, although the population at any given time may not be clearly represented in this number, for there are regular flows of people in and out of town. Ilimpii is the largest of the Evenki Autonomous District's three counties. The Ilimpii County settlements discussed in this paper include Tura, Chirinda, Ekonda, and Essei.[11] Olenek, Tura, and Ekonda, the settlements with which I am most familiar, will be more prominent in this work than the others.

The majority of the people from Tura are of Slavic descent, though many are from families that have lived in Siberia for at least one generation. Many of the Slavs came to

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[11] The three counties are Ilimpii, Baikit, and Tungus-Chunsk. Ilimpii has ten settlements, the majority of which are located on the Nizhnaia Tunguska river. Aside from those mentioned above, these include: Kislokan, Nidym, Noginsk, Tutonchany, Uchami, and IUkta.

Tura in the late Soviet era when wages for northern workers were significantly higher than in the South. The Evenkis in Tura come from a variety of locales and are representative of several groups, most notably the Evenkis from the Irkutsk area (known sometimes as *katangski* Evenkis) and the local [*mestnye*] Ilimpii Evenkis.[12] As the intelligentsia of the Evenki nation in Soviet times was largely drawn from the Katanga area, north of lake Baikal, a large number of administrative positions came to be occupied by these Evenkis. There is also a significant group of mixed descent or *metiz* people in Tura. *Metiz* (masc.) and *metizka* (fem.) are terms used by some people in reference to their ethnically mixed background. However, *metiz/kas* are unable to locate legal rights in the realm of mixed aboriginal/non-aboriginal descent as the Metis peoples do in Canada.[13] In other words, there is no legally recognized *metiz* nation in Russia. Nonetheless, *metiz* people have the option of choosing a single national affiliation based on their ancestry. For example they may choose Russian, Sakha, or Evenki but there is no option to legally identify as a *metiz* or *metizka*. As such, these designations, in Russian, refer not the ascription of a legally recognized national identity (i.e. Metis nation) but rather to local practices of identification.[14] Other indigenous nations neighbouring the Evenkis in Ilimpii include, most significantly, the Dolgan and the Sakha.

Evenki-speaking peoples are widely distributed across central and eastern Siberia, including the Far East and some northern areas of the People's Republic of China. The

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[12] Local Evenkis refer to themselves in Russian as *'mestnye'* and non-local Evenkis from Irkutsk Region as '*Katangskie Evenki'*.

[13] In de Tremaudan's history of the Metis nation in western Canada, the following passage is attributed to Louis Riel: "It is true that our Indian origin is humble, but it is indeed just that we honour our mothers as well as our fathers. Why should we be so preoccupied with what degree of mingling we have of European and Indian blood? No matter how little we have of one or the other, do not both gratitude and filial love require us to make a point of saying, 'We are Metis.'" (de Temaudan 1982: 200).

[14] Anderson presents a more detailed discussion on the politics of mixed descent in the Taimyr Autonomous District (Anderson 2000b).

Evenki language is part of the larger linguistic group Tungus-Manchu, which is a branch of the Altai family of languages. Much of the early twentieth-century literature refers to the Evenki peoples as 'Tungus' and describes them as hunters and reindeer herders of the taiga. Tungus, however, is not an ethnonym and is regarded by most Evenkis as a pejorative name. Those Evenkis living in east-central Siberia prior to the 1930s spoke a northern dialect of the Evenki language. Today, Ekonda and Chirinda are two remaining Ilimpii settlements dominated by northern dialect-speaking Evenkis.[15] Because of the predominance of ethnic Evenkis, these two villages are two of four *natsional'nie poselki* (national settlements) which enjoy special attention from the district administration.

Cultural differences should also be noted between Evenkis speaking different dialects. In Glafira Vasilevich's classic ethnography of the Evenki nation there are three distinct types of Evenki speech: 1. hushing, 2. whistling, 3. sibilant-spirant (1969: 5). Kochneva, in her thematic Russian-Evenki dictionary (1990), reports that in Vasilevich's (1948) *Notes on the Dialects of the Evenki (Tungus) Language* the author marks seven distinct dialects of Evenki: "symskii, tokminsko-verkholenskii, podkamenno-Tungusskoi, nepskii, ilimpiiskii, erbogachenskii, sakhalinski" (5). Gortsev and Konstantin, according to Kochneva, suggested a tripartite division of Evenki speech: Northern, Southern, and Eastern (1990). The northern speech, writes Kochneva, "is prevalent in the north of Krasnoiarsk krai and northern Irkutsk oblast', the makeup of this speech can be delineated in the following manner: Nakannov, Ilimpii (Kislokan, Ekonda, Chirinda), Tutonchan (Evenki speakers from Uchami and Tutonchan), as well as the speech of those Evenki still living on the Olenek river"(1990:5). Following Anderson (2000b), the Taimyr Evenkis could also be added to this list of northern Evenki speakers.

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[15] Kochneva (1990) includes Kislokan with Ekonda and Chirinda in the Ilimpii sub-dialect of northern Evenki speech.

These three linguistic divisions are more commonly used today to differentiate types of Evenki speech. The southern Evenki dialect has been developed as the entire nation's literary language. This resulted in a general discontent among the northern-speaking Evenki whose language was marginalized by an administrative act of efficiency. Bloch writes that "[i]n the case of the Evenki in the Evenk Autonomous Okrug, the hierarchy established in the 1930s still remains real . . . Even today those speaking the 'literary' dialect of the language are considered by many to be more cultured than others" (1996: 77). Both southern and northern dialects are represented in the E.A.O. but the Ilimpii county is primarily composed of Evenkis who speak the northern dialect. On many occasions I have noted northern dialect speaking Evenkis commenting on the relative unintelligibility of Evenkis' speech from other settlements in the district. I can remember several instances, on the other hand, where local Evenkis, when travelling abroad in the Soviet Union, encountered other Evenki speakers from distant locales such as Irkutsk and Amur: in these meetings they have all emphasized the mutual intelligibility of different Evenki dialects, thus supporting claims to a national identity.[16]

The current bounds of Evenkiia form a massive area comprising 767,600 km^2 of the Krasnoiarsk territory. It is sparsely populated with 0.03 persons/ km^2 (Benderski et al. 1996: 5). Tura, the capital of the district, is a remote settlement more than 1,000 kilometres as the crow flies from the territory's capital, Krasnoiarsk. I use the word 'remote' here to indicate both a lack of accessibility as well as physical isolation. For most of the year, aircraft are the primary form of transport and travel out of the county. There are two periods in the year when the rivers are deep enough to enable heavy riverine transport via the Enisei. This route is generally used to haul large shipments of goods from the South and offers no passenger travel. The longest passenger journey on boat within the district, that I am aware of, exists between Tutonchan and Tura, a two-to-four day sail. While cargo barges are restricted to periods of high water, the passenger ferries, because of their shallow hulls, can navigate the rivers throughout most of the summer. In the winter season, after freeze-up, winter roads [*zimnyi dorogi*]—which crisscross the taiga in great numbers but are only selectively maintained—open to the transport of freight but, again, not passengers.

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[16] For an excellent summary of the Evenki language, see Victor Atknine's "The Evenki Language

Travel within the Ilimpii county follows similar criteria. Of the settlements considered in this thesis, only Tura and Nidym, which are both situated on the Nizhnaia Tunguska, are linked by river. Ekonda, Chirinda, and Essei are all set deep in the taiga, 292 km, 364 km, and 475 km, respectively from Tura. Flights to these settlements are infrequent and costly, though they provide the primary, if only (statistically significant) form of travel for their inhabitants. As with travel in the rest of the district, in the winter months there are networks of winter roads that connect the settlements to the capital. These, however, are typically used only for freight and I have never heard of people travelling as passengers on such journeys. In fact, I have often been warned against hitching a ride on a village-bound truck because the trip is so long and uncomfortable, and possibly unsafe.

Ekonda is a settlement with roughly five hundred permanent inhabitants. While today it is located at the confluence of the Viliui and Upper Viliuikan rivers, until the 1930s it was about a hundred kilometres to the north on a small lake. There are numerous conflicting stories about the decision to move the village from an old site to the one presently occupied; the point of contention being the lake and the quality of water. Some say the lake was polluted, the fish were dying, and the people were getting sick. Others say that the fish were healthy and that there were other reasons for the relocation.

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from the Enisei to Sakhalin" (1997).

One possible reason behind the move is the drive for bureaucratic and economic efficiency that was being undertaken through the consolidation of disparate villages and settlements.

The Ilimpii area is interesting, in part, because it is not cut through by navigable rivers. As a tract of land, it resisted the travel practices of Russian and early Soviet colonizers who moved independently along the river systems but were dependent on the mobility of reindeer herders for overland travel. While 'old' Ekonda lay closer to the north-south trade route that connected the Nizhnaia Tunguska to Chirinda and on to Essei, 'new' Ekonda is much more out-of-the-way. Perhaps the move had to do with the provisioning of aerial transport that was anticipated in the late 1940s. Ultimately, however, there is no clear authoritative version as to why the people of Ekonda, who had only been sedentarized for a short time, were suddenly compelled to move. This resettlement was only one of the significant changes that were happening under Soviet rule.

Ekonda is dominated by Ilimpii Evenkis but is also home to non-local Evenkis, other indigenous peoples and some Slavs who had settled there in the Soviet era. While there were no Evenki settlements in pre-Soviet and early Soviet times the people travelling in this part of east-central Siberia at the time of colonization are grandparents and great grandparents to many of the present-day Evenkis. While interviewing elders in Ekonda about how they travelled in the past I met one woman who was introduced to me as the 'last' Olenek bride. In my short encounter over black tea from China with the elder from Olenek, I asked many questions about her memories of coming to Ekonda. She in turn queried me on who I knew in Olenek. Prior to settlement and the establishment of a territorial/republican boundary between present-day Evenki Autonomous District and Olenek District in the Republic of Sakha, women from Olenek often married into families from the Ilimpii. Vasilevich and Levin write:

> Kombagir and Udygir families [*rody*]. . .used to travel [lit. nomaded: *kochevali*] between the basins of the Khatanga-Kotui and Olenek. Evenkis of the Nizhnaia Tunguska called them 'chuzhie', 'drugie', 'family by husband'. . . These were family [by clan] marrying women from different clans. In the 1930s they lived not only in Ilimpii raion but also in the neighbouring Katanga raion in Irkutsk Oblast. [1951: 156]

The Olenek elder had been in Ekonda for many years and had only a handful of photographs of Olenek relatives. During the Soviet era she had an opportunity to visit kin in Yakutsk. In those days, as is the case now, the voyage would have been a long series of flights through major centres like Tura and Krasnoiarsk before arriving in Yakutiia. Nonetheless, opportunities for such travel before 1991 were far more common than today. This example illustrates both the shift from a traditional Evenki system of paths to a modern Soviet system of mechanized travel, as well as an increasing de-mobilization of the rural population in the post-Soviet era. Where there were once significant ties between Evenkis now settled in Ekonda and Olenek, today such relations are nearly impossible. Kin ties established in the days preceding the application of Soviet corridors of movement and social engagement have been largely forgotten. Such appears to be the case with the 'Olenek bride', whose connections to Olenek have faded due to shifts in official travel routes, state mandated residence patterns, and post-Soviet impoverishment.

While Olenek and Ekonda are only four hundred kilometres apart, the social and political distance is immense. Modern transport corridors feed people on from Olenek via Udachnyi or Niurba through Yakutia while Ekondians are forced to travel to Krasnoiarsk via Tura before flying onward to other destinations in the Federation. Olenek Evenkis, the vast majority of whom do not speak Evenki but rather Sakha and Russian, have very little contact with other Evenki people from the EAO or anywhere else, for that matter. In 1996 the only contact with the Evenki Autonomous District came through a 'national' singer: an Olenek-born Evenki woman who, as an Evenki national singer, knew no spoken Evenki but had travelled extensively in the Republic of Sakha, Krasnoiarsk Territory, as well as St. Peterburg and Moscow. This irony can only be understood in the context of the Olenek district where ethnic Evenkis have spoken Sakha as their native language for generations.[17] Her mobility, now more limited than ever, is an artifact of Soviet support for the culture industry.

In Tura, in the autumn of 1999, an envoy from the Republic of Sakha arrived to discuss the possibility of opening a chartered flight between Olenek and Essei. Essei is a settlement to the north of Tura that is made up of a majority of Sakhas. Through the Soviet period and early post-Soviet era, occasional flights were made from Olenek to both Ekonda and Essei. Far from the norm, these were special flights organized by regional affiliates of Aeroflot. The recent negotiations to open a flight corridor between Olenek and Essei were undertaken in Sakha, excluding both Evenkis and Russians. Just as ties of kinship between Ekonda and Olenek Evenkis have weakened, identity based on language has strengthened previously unreported ties between Olenek and Essei Sakhas and Sakha-speaking Evenkis.

The cosmopolitan character of Ekonda is evidence of the extensive travel that was a mobile norm in the pre-Soviet era. David G. Anderson (2000b) described the extensiveness of travel in pre-collectivized times by researching the genealogies of the people of Khantaiskoe Ozero in the Taimyr District. He writes that Evenkis are known for "their extensive use of land and their wide knowledge of the customs and languages of their neighbours" (ibid: 7). Vasilevich, too, using historical documents alongside her own ethnographic research, offers broad distribution of family names as proof of far-ranging mobility. The name of one prominent Ekonda family, Khutukogir, has been recorded in the areas of Lake Ogata and Chirinda, on the Lower Tunguska and Tutonchan, as well as on the Khantaika—nearly a thousand kilometres dividing the two most distant sites (Vasilevich 1969: 283). Many family names from Ekonda are reported to have similarly broad distribution. Sakha names, too, are prominent in this settlement, suggestive of earlier ties with Olenek Sakhas and Evenkis as well as the mobility provided through the Soviet system of mechanized travel.

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[17] I.S. Gurvich(1977) is generally considered the Soviet authority on Olenek-region ethnography. He gives an account of the 'northern reindeer herding yakuts'. But the existence of ethnically Evenki people who speak only Sakha and Russian belies his authoritative ethnography.

Soviet and Russian ethnographers and sociologists (I.M. Suslov 1952; G.M. Vasilevich 1969; V.A. Tugolukov 1969, 1985; M.G. Turov 1990; A.A. Sirina 1995) have made significant contributions to the study of the culture of Evenki-speaking peoples. Of these people, Vasilevich's ethnographies produced from expeditions in the 1930s are the most relevant and useful. Her extensive travels in Ilimpii and the surrounding areas occurred at a time when the Soviet state was just beginning to entrench authority over its northern frontiers. Turov, Tugolukov, and Sirina provide additional glimpses into the lives of Evenkis to the south of Ilimpii. The orthodox priest and missionary Father Mikhail Suslov and his son Innokenti Mikhailovich have contributed significantly to documenting life in east-central Siberia, as well. Their work as missionaries (Russian orthodox and communist, respectively) also had significant impact in the organization and social relations of Evenkis in this region.

While there are a number of English-speaking anthropologists who have worked among various Evenki groups, there are few ethnographic references to the Ilimpii Evenkis. Aside from ongoing research conducted by Anderson (2000c; In press, a; In press, b) the most recent work in the area is Alexia Bloch's (1996) dissertation. In this work she explores Evenki identities in relation to the state through women's experiences of the Tura residential school. Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov's (1998) dissertation is more recent and concerns Evenkis to the southern part of the District. Ssorin-Chaikov conducted field work in the Baikit region of Evenkiia in 1988-89 and 1993-95. His dissertation explores the discursive construction of Evenki identities through an examination of Soviet governance. His ethnographic work, he writes, leads him to treat "the 'transnational (i.e., European) model' of modernity as hypothetical at best" (1998: 313). Anderson's book (2000b), based on field work with the northern Evenkis of lake Khantaika in the Taimyr Autonomous District, provides some insight into the situation of the Ilimpii Evenkis. In fact, as Anderson points out, there are historically relevant kinship ties between Evenki people of these two regions and they both speak the same dialect. Most notably, these three anthropologists document a deteriorating post-socialist landscape: Anderson's and Ssorin-Chaikov's work having taken place before, during, and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union; Bloch's in the first years of transition. My own field work occurred in a time of severe economic crisis following the initial optimism in the early years of the Russian Federation.

3.2. Characterizing Evenki mobility through time

> Evenkis—a unique people, managing in the past to colonize and master a colossal territory from the Enisei [river] to the coast of the Pacific Ocean in latitude and from the border of the forest-tundra to the southern border of the taiga in the longitudinal directions. The entire ethnic history of the Evenkis is one of saturation with numerous evidences of cultural communication with other nationalities of Siberia, beginning with the very earliest of their [evolutionary] steps to today . . . [Turov 1990: 4]

The Evenki peoples are renowned for their extensive travels throughout Siberia. While my thesis is concerned with Ilimpii Evenkis at the turning point between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is worth examining 'Evenki' or 'Tungus' mobility as it has appeared in ethnographic discourse. As an abstract linguistic-culture group the Tungus/Evenki are indeed well dispersed through the majority of Siberia; as individuals and families, however, Evenkis' travels, still extensive, have been generally limited within smaller regions. In the Soviet tradition of anthropology, according to V.A. Tishkov where " 'ethnos' and 'ethnogenesis' are still the most powerful and sacred categories" (1994: 88), the study of society has played a far less significant role than in the European and American traditions. As such, " 'ethnoses' as collective bodies and interethnic relations and 'processes' "(1994: 90) have been the privileged sites of enquiry. The 'pre-historical' story of Evenkis, for example, has been narrowly replicable and remarkably portable:

> The overall dimensions of the territory settled by the Evenks are difficult to assess, but amount to approximately one-quarter of the whole of Siberia and the Soviet Far East (2,500,000-3,000,000 square kilometres). [Vasilevich and Smolyak 1964: 620]

> Evenkis (formerly named—Tungus) —a sparsely numbered people; from time immemorial they have settled the enormous expanse of Eastern Siberia and the Far East; creating over a stretch of many centuries, in harsh climatic conditions, the original material and spiritual culture of reindeer herders and hunters. [Zolotorubov, et al. 1992: 17]

Clearly, the romance of nomadic travel is prevalent in the ethnographic literature. Mixed with a disciplinary bias towards the study of ethnic origins and processes it results in studies that are rarely concerned with the actual mechanics of nomadism. Despite this evident interest in mobility and travel, there are relatively few specific models of Evenki movement. For the Evenkis living in central Siberia there are even fewer concrete examples of actual travels, journeys, and paths. While constructing general patterns of Evenki travel is achieved through literature review, this same material needs to be sifted through for marginal references to the mobility of specific Evenki groups.

The first scholarly expedition to east-central Siberia seems to have been in 1723, when Daniel Messerschmidt travelled down the Enisei to Turukhansk and then up the Lower Tunguska to reach the Lena river (Vasilevich 1969: 21). Messerschmidt's travels occurred only a century after the first colonial foundations were established in the area. Yuri Slezkine writes that Messerschmidt was sent to Siberia by Tsar Peter to "study the country's geography, natural history, medicine and medicinal plants, peoples and their philology, old monuments and antiquities, and 'everything noteworthy'"(1994: 54). In the Ilimpii area the German ethnographer Middendorf and the Finnish Linguist Mattias Castren were the first scholars to visit the Evenkis. According to Vasilevich, Middendorf and Castren were in and around central Siberia through the mid-1840s; at this time Middendorf met with the "relatively unknown" groups of Evenkis from Taimyr and Ilimpii (1969: 23). In the hundred-year interval between the mid-1800s and the middle of the twentieth century, the presence of the Russians north of the Lower Tunguska gradually increased. However, there was no significant increase in the ethnographic study of northern Evenkis.

Of the English-language ethnographies, which are few and far between, Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogoroff (1929; 1935) is the most notable author. Shirokogoroff was the first ethnographer to publish, in English, his speculations on the origins of the

Tungus—his work contributed significantly to the discipline of anthropology in Russia. With regards to the 'northern reindeer herding Tungus',[18] Shirokogoroff writes that they migrated from the south:

> [I]n the Enissy River basin, one will perhaps find more or less than four distinguishable waves. . .every movement is composed of small migrations of groups or even clans, so that the combined movement of all units and clans gives the idea of a certain general movement which, to be sure, may be hardly realized if one looks at it from the point of view of one certain unit. [1929: 168]

Having conducted his fieldwork in the early part of the twentieth century, Shirokogoroff witnessed the complex multi-ethnic landscape that predated the establishment of Soviet rule. Based on this fieldwork in Eastern Siberia and the Far East, Shirokogoroff became familiar with several peoples speaking Tungus family languages—his northern-most travels taking him just north of Lake Baikal. Shirokogoroff's most significant contribution, however, was not to the pre-colonial histories of Evenkis but rather to an ethnography of Evenki life at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Ultimately, there is very little that can be said with certainty about the lifeways and travel practices of Evenki people prior to the invasion of Russians from the west. This chapter will now shift its focus to develop a picture of Evenki people's mobility in the colonial era. Extensive travel is a central metaphor for understanding the Evenki peoples in both ethnographic literature and local discourse. It is clear, however, that Evenki people did not typically travel from the sea of Okhotsk to the Enisei in their yearly migrations (at least not until the Soviet era), nonetheless their mobility in the taiga was far from limited and there was clear reason for the incoming Russians to marvel at the extensiveness of their travels.

While anthropologists have attempted to map out the history of the 'Tungus' ethnic group prior to the arrival of the Russians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the degree of abstraction is too great to be of concern for this study. This is not the case for all anthropologists, though. In his focus on the particularities of dwelling and locality involved in self-identification, Anderson draws on the *actual* space involved in Evenkis' travels by examining birthplaces and genealogies of Evenkis in the Taimyr, giving a "picture of the extensive travels of people before the great centralizations of the 1960s" (1995a: 189).[19] This method of measuring the extensiveness of people's travels through genealogical records is also used by Vasilevich (1969) and Tugolukov (1985). For the purposes of my thesis I will use the extrapolations from this technique as the bench-mark for historicizing Evenki practices; to go back any further is simply too speculative.

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[18] Specifically, a number of clans located between the northern tip of Lake Baikal and the Vitim

A more useful appraisal of Evenki mobility is delivered in Shirokogoroff's *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (1935):

> In accordance with the acquired knowledge of the primary milieu the Tungus have worked out their system of migrations, also imposed by their chief industry of hunting and reindeer breeding. . .We have seen that the Tungus have created a system of communications, the paths. Indeed, in the eyes of the people accustomed to the railways and artificially erected high-roads with bridges [and] dams, the system of Tungus paths would not seem to be a technical achievement, a cultural adaptation. However, it is not so when one looks more closely at the phenomenon. [87]

Elders that I have interviewed from Ekonda and Chirinda recall their families, and occasionally themselves, making distant voyages on reindeer sleigh to Turukhansk, on the bank of the Enisei; a journey of over 700 kilometres that was made as often as three times a year. Presumably they were there for more favourable exchange rates on trade goods, a greater selection of imported commodities, and to visit the Russian Orthodox church. The journey would have taken about a week. According to Anderson, the pre-

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river.

[19] In this passage Anderson is talking about the actual extensiveness of Evenkis' social relations with each other as well as the 'sentient ecology' of the taiga. Elsewhere he uses the idea of extensiveness in opposition to what he terms the intensive character of Soviet development (2000b).

revolutionary trade in sable and Arctic fox furs required the steady use of trap lines which were around 400-1,000 km in length (2000b).

In establishing a thesis around Evenki mobility it is essential to begin with a sketch of social organization.[20] In the Tsarist era the Ilimpii Evenkis traced kinship through the patriline and seem to have done so prior to the arrival of the Russians. In most instances they also appear to have been patrilocal, living and travelling with the husband's father's kin. Nomadic life, however, was also fluid and allowed for considerable variety in residence patterns. Most early reports from missionaries and traders describe the 'Tungus' as being socially organized according to tents [*chumi*] or families. Kinship ties in Evenkiia, as Anderson (2000b), Bloch (1996), and Ssorin-Chaikov (1998) have all shown, have been greatly affected by Soviet modernization. These all follow Caroline Humphrey's key ethnography (1983) of a Soviet collective farm which was the first academic work in English to explore the modification of kinship under Soviet governance.

Given a fractured and partial historical record it is difficult to describe particular pre-Soviet Evenki households, economies, and social structures. Anderson, however, provides a plausible typification of Evenki households which

> at the turn of the century did not include many people nor many reindeer. Small aggregates of five or six kinsmen, remembering their kinship for up to four generations along the paternal line moved extensively throughout the Putoran plateau with herds of reindeer rarely exceeding forty head. [2000b:44]

This supports earlier accounts of typical Evenki household structures and mobility. Vasilevich and Smolyak write that among reindeer herding Evenkis, "in most cases the breeding was intended for the purposes of transportation, and households with up to 25 head of reindeer were predominant" (1964: 629). The yearly cycle of the Evenkis is characterized through a coming together of extended kin in the spring and summer and a splintering off into smaller family groups in the autumn and winter seasons (ibid.).

Ultimately it is difficult to outline a 'traditional territory' for Evenkis of the Ilimpii region. Prior to the arrival of the Tsar's tribute collectors at the end of the seventeenth century Evenkis living on the central Siberian plateau travelled nomadically throughout the taiga. Their movement through the Tsarist era came to be more and more associated with trapping areas, sites of tribute payment, and administrative boundaries. Most important, perhaps, are the territorial markers that have prevailed for the last fifty years or so, which have come, to a certain extent, to determine spheres of Evenki social relations and experience in the first ten years of the post-Soviet period. Prior to the establishment of these territorial markers the scope of mobility in the taiga was much broader. However, before exploring the broad and sudden imposition of a Soviet landscape, I will unravel the more gradual changes that occurred through the Russian Imperial era and the time of revolution and civil war.

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[20] There is some difficulty, however, in organizing our approach to social organization because the Soviet tradition of ethnography used what Vladimir Plotkin has called "ideologically loaded concepts which defy easy translation", which include: " '*pervo-bytnoe obshchestvo*' ('primeval society'), a '*rod*' (unilineal kingroup), an '*obshchina*' (local group), all having connotations without Western equivalents. For decades, the argument on the nature of precapitalist societies was conducted in terms of the rod/obshchina dichotomy, where both concepts are by origin and in reality reified categories out of the Russian peasant past, rather than general concepts corresponding to the institutions of pre-class societies." (Plotkin 1990: 240).

4. Travel in the Russian colonial and Soviet socialist eras

The imperial expansion of European nations in the post-enlightenment era was not restricted to Western Europe. Russia, too, was in a position to expand its empire and had the will to do so. Expeditions and military forces, centralized in Moscow under the Tsar's direct control, were sent east to annex adjacent frontier lands. There were, however, significant distinctions between early Russian imperialism and that of other European nations. The nature of colonization was characterized by the Tsar's interest in extracting wealth in the form of animal hides from the vast taiga regions that lay to the east of the Ural mountains. This practice was contrary to the pattern of colonialism in British North America, where colonization after 1867 was as much about settlement and nation building as it was about the establishment of a resource colony. With his tributary imperative, the Tsar laid explicit policy dictating the terms on which 'natives' were to be treated. Particular emphasis was placed on facilitating their ability to pay tribute. Another difference in the character of Siberian colonization was that the northern Siberian taiga offered little potential for agriculture and was a poor draw for settlers who might otherwise have competed for territory with the various indigenous groups.

Resistance to the collection of tribute and to the state's intermittent attempts to reorganize Evenki political relations occasionally resulted in bloodshed. Such violent resistance is well reported in other areas of Siberia (Tugolukov 1985; Forsyth 1992; Slezkine 1994). A more common scenario of resistance towards the state was one of avoidance, whereby Evenkis travelled deeper into the taiga in an attempt to escape the tribute collectors. The mobility of Evenkis was a constant irritation to the colonial administration's fledgling bureaucracy. S. Patkanov wrote in 1906, that "[i]n their travels the Tungus pay no attention…to District boundaries…[and, in the South] they're not even shy of the borders of the state" (Vasilevich 1969: 6). Patkanov's dissatisfaction was clear, especially as he goes on to describe the way in which nomadism was so confounding to tribute collectors (ibid.). One ethnographer's frustrations at the end of the nineteenth century were marked by his inability to make sense of Evenki movements in the taiga: "they wander almost all year across unknowable forest thickets" wrote Ivan Mainov (Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 29).

The European demand for fine pelts spurred an active local economy independent of Moscow's tribute system which had, in fact, preceded the arrival of tribute collectors. Both established trading posts and mobile traders became an integral part of the taiga landscape. Tugolukov notes that many Sakha (Yakut) traders moved through the taiga as well, offering an alternative to the Russian traders and trading posts—though not necessarily better terms (1963: 18). In this era, Evenkis' seasonal rounds were expanded to include trapping for tribute and trade, travelling to summer trade fairs, and, occasionally, pilgrimages to Orthodox Christian churches. The political, economic, and spiritual landscape of east-central Siberia was in a state of flux.

Over the roughly three hundred years of Tsarist rule in Siberia there were many shifts in power relations and in the intensification of the state's involvement in the lives of Evenkis. The pressure of colonization disrupted an already heterogeneous ethnic landscape. In the later years of the Russian imperial era new systems of political organization among the central Siberian Evenkis emerged, creatively reflecting imposed legal and economic structures. Thus, older clan systems were altered and became more amenable entities for Tsarist bureaucratic practice.

4.1. The Evenki system of paths

> **The reindeer herder, who manages a transportation system that works without petrol or machine-made parts, visits a number of different pastures often hundreds of kilometres apart to find the best feed or best weather for the deer. [Anderson 1995b:189]**

The established systems of paths used by Evenkis existed in contrast to that of the Russian invaders, traders, and missionaries. Evenki people's activities, however, cannot be de-historicized and typified as unchanging cultural practices over time. It is clear from the records and reports at our disposal that the central Siberian plateau region was a well-traversed and culturally mixed landscape prior to the arrival of the Europeans. The difficulty in locating Evenki people among other nations in this region is evidenced in the typically confused and conflicting reports of early explorers, traders, bureaucrats, clergymen, and ethnographers. The task of figuring out who was who and who was living where is confounded by a fluidity of identities and mobile households. As Anderson writes, acceptable identities varied between institutions, individuals, and peoples: "An understanding of identity on the Khantaika requires a sensitivity to the way that state-created identities can be wielded creatively" (2000b: 99). Self-identification is fluid and often contradictory but only becomes troublesome in the growing bureaucratization of the North where face-to-face interactions are subordinated in favour of abstract relations of governance and discipline. Where economic activities such as reindeer herding, working as an administrative assistant, or writing an academic paper act as a greater mark of identity in face-to-face relations, in aboriginal-state relations *identity* itself has become fetishized in a European ideal of bureaucratized, immobile and fixed, personhood and affiliation to ethnicity.

The fixity of boundaries and organizational structures was an advent of the new colonial government. Referring to Shirokogoroff's early pioneering work in the study of Tungus social organization, Dmitrii Shimkin writes that "Tungus (Evenki) clans had strong leadership, including shamans, and clan ceremonials, but were loosely associated with territories and lacked clan sanctuaries" (Shimkin 1990: 319). In the context of Tsarist bureaucracy, Evenki clans and tents came to be more associated with administrative units spatially bound in territories. It would be a mistake, however, to explain this away as an inevitable result of state hegemony. In many instances Evenkis manipulated Russian law and discipline in their own local political struggles (Slezkine 1994; Ssorin-Chaikov 1998).

All of this translates into a somewhat shifting set of traditional Evenki practices and identities during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The most common assessment of the changing cultural landscape through this period suggests that "the Evenki mobile economy was one of reindeer-facilitated hunting, trapping, fishing, and trading" (Anderson 2000a: 226). Gail Fondahl aptly generalized the situation when she wrote that "[i]n the tayga no single activity (hunting, fishing, or reindeer herding) traditionally sustained a family, *obshchina* or clan; rather, a combination of these activities provided for both subsistence and commercial/trade needs" (Fondahl 1998: 113). As the needs changed over time, Evenkis adapted and altered their approaches to work. It is much more reasonable to speak of a shifting, mixed repertoire of Evenki practices than to essentialize any single practice out of time. Unfortunately, the way that Evenkis actually thought about work and identity in this period is elusive.

Mobility choices for the Ilimpii Evenkis were partially governed by the range of economic possibilities held in the seasonal round. As is common throughout the sub-Arctic, great seasonal variations limit the sorts of activity that can occur at any given time. Prior to the arrival of the Russians, who travelled principally by river, the primary mode of travel in east-central Siberia was either on foot or with the aid of reindeer. Glafira Vasilevich (1969) makes reference to a range of travel practices among the Evenkis which coincided with the number of reindeer owned. The Evenkis' mixed, forest-based economies generally necessitated a degree of flexible mobility. For those breeding reindeer there was a constant need to travel to new pastures. Within the realm of reindeer breeding there existed different needs as well, which were especially dependant on the size of the herd. It seems that the majority of Evenkis raised reindeer herds to enhance their mobility and to provide an emergency food source. Despite this being the most common form of reindeer husbandry, some Evenkis raised larger herds of deer for meat production. The accumulation of wealth in the form of reindeer engendered differential social relations. Anderson writes of this as "lucrative mobility" (2000b: 143). Smaller herds of reindeer were composed of enough animals to meet the transport needs of the family. Larger herds, however, provided for user networks that extended beyond the families' needs. This means that 'surplus' deer could be 'rented' out, given as gifts, lent, and (rarely) sold.

While domesticated reindeer are associated with the traditional Evenki economy, it is clear that the ownership of deer has never been common to all Evenki families. Given the epizootic sicknesses that occasionally decimated herds in conjunction with deadly human epidemics, it seems likely that ownership of reindeer was not always constant. Systems of reindeer herding among Evenki herders were far from homogenous and are likely associated with both the size of the herd and the herders' personal inclinations. In the *Tenacity of Ethnicity*, Marjorie Balzer writes that

> I.M. Suslov . . . systematized five Siberian economies involving reindeer: (1) tundra, with primary dependency on reindeer herding; (2) tundra, with primary focus on hunting polar fox, but with some reindeer; (3) forest-tundra, with focus on small reindeer herds; (4) forest-tundra, with primary attention to fur animal hunting, but with some reindeer; and (5) taiga, with primary dependency on hunting and fishing, but with a few reindeer for transport. [1999: 128]

Prior to the period of Soviet industrialization in the 1950s and 1960s and after the dissolution in the 1990s, the Evenkis of the Ilimpii taiga would fit best in the latter three categories.

The large herds of Soviet-era industrial herding would require extensive pastures and nearly constant movement while the smaller herds that existed prior to the mid-twentieth century allowed Evenkis much more flexibility. Those Evenkis who had no deer [*bezolen'ye*] were considered impoverished by the Russian colonizers as well as in Russian and Soviet ethnographies. Vasilevich writes that

> Evenki reindeer impoverishment [maloolennost'] in the former Turukhansk region . . . was isolated in a particular group of Evenkis on lake Chirinda. A. Chekanov and F. Miller in the 19thC. with difficulty found reindeer among the Evenki of the upper Viliui. This last group, occupied with fishing, were singled out from their group who were nomadizing with their reindeer. [1969: 52, footnote]

If reindeerlessness was necessarily a condition of poverty in pre-colonial times. It is clear that the accumulation of wealth came to be associated with the size of reindeer herds, especially in the Soviet era when census-takers took note not only of people and their clan/tribe affiliations but also the number of deer that they owned. Soviet ethnographers and ideologues, in an effort to apply social class analysis to the indigenous peoples, read this situation as one of exploitation. Under their revision of history, the wealthy herd owner was thought to control the labour potential of impoverished Evenkis through debt slavery. Based on questionable estimations of herd size and ownership it was later calculated who were the wealthy oppressors, or *kulaks*, and who were the oppressed poor.[21] The variety of economic pursuits within the taiga environment resulted in an equal variety of travel practices.

> Permanent tracks in the taiga were only to be found at the approaches to the trading points. Migrations were always in the direction of new places. Summer tracks usually passed over watersheds and winter tracks along rivers, through the tundra, only deviating in the case of mountain passes. [Vasilevich & Smolyak 1964: 630]

The mobility of Ilimpii Evenkis was not simply a function of their economy; there were numerous factors that shaped the ways in which they travelled through east-central Siberia. Using archival documents associated with expeditions, trading posts, and churches, ethnographers describe the Ilimpii taiga as a tremendously active and changing landscape. Shirokogoroff suggests that for the Tungus of TransBaikaliia, human-animal relations "in taiga life compel the Tungus, first of all, to know every valley thoroughly, and also to know which animals inhabit it. He must know where he may travel without annoying other animals, just as he does in reference to other ethnical groups" (1929: 43). One type of movement in the colonial period, described by Vladilen A. Tugolukov (1985), is based on both reindeer and pedestrian mobility. Though many of the reasons for migrations and diasporas remain obscure, at least some of the most common ones are known. However, many demographic reconstructions of the Ilimpii are based on tribute payment records which are of questionable accuracy. The manner in which Tugolukov traces the movements of people north of the Nizhnaia Tunguska is through the appearance and disappearance of clan and family names in the tribute registers. Vasilevich writes that at the end of the nineteenth century, Evenkis living in remote regions of the Lower and Podkamenaia Tunguskas remained relatively unknown to the Russians, whose expeditions at the beginning of the twentieth century had not yet penetrated deeply into Evenki territory: "There had been no meeting with Evenkis in the upper parts of the Podkamenaia and Nizhnaia Tunguskas and the region between them" (1969: 32). This anonymity, however, is not equivalent with ignorance. Indeed, such remotely located Evenkis, because of pre-established indigenous trade routes, would have been well aware of the Europeans who had been in the area for over two hundred years.

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[21] As the intensity of Soviet industrialization in the north increased in the 1960s and 1970s the wealth of state farms was directly linked to the size of reindeer herds. Rather than democratizing

Despite the Tsar's edicts prohibiting the undue molestation of the "natives"[22] there was considerable violence meted out from the hands of state representatives and other entrepreneurs.

While the Russians generally stuck to the navigable river systems, Evenkis had the knowledge and technological skills to efficiently travel across the taiga. The forest was, without a doubt, the realm of Evenkis. The seeming isolation of remotely located Evenkis was, in part, a strategy of avoidance. Although the Tsar's tribute collectors had methods of ensuring that yearly dues of pelts were paid, their spheres of influence must have been highly limited.[23] The winter forts along the rivers were not, after all, the only points to acquire essential foods like flour and tea and equipment like rifle shells and canvas.

Warfare and violent conflict were also reasons for migrations of Evenkis in east-central Siberia. Such conflict is noted in Gurvich's (1977) *Culture of the Northern Yakut Reindeer Herders* as well as Tugolukov's (1985) *Tunguses (Evenki and Eveni) of Middle and Western Siberia*. Nonetheless, internecine wars that occurred in east-central Siberia remain unclear markers of territoriality due to frequent migrations of people. Rather than imagining stable geographies of territorial conflict, the landscape is better understood in the context of shifting regimes of migration and travel. Tugolukov writes, for example, of an insurrection by local Evenkis in Essei in the winter of 1682-83. After the people in the fort were killed, the majority of the Essei Tungus moved (nomadized away [*otkochevali*]) to the North and the East (1985: 177). This is one of the more overt instances of resistance to Tsarist violence and the obligatory payment of tribute in the

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herd ownership, state planners consolidated herds and re-located power to centralized bureacracies.

[22] The official designations for the non-European peoples living in Siberia have undergone a number of significant changes since the colonial era.

[23] It is widely known that the Cossaks took hostages to ransom payments of tribute (Fisher 1943).

Ilimpii area. It also reflects conditions whereby territorial allegiances were less than stable and Evenkis were able to move with relative freedom to other places.

Despite resistance and avoidance strategies, the necessity of tribute payment and the growing demand for trade goods overshadowed the autonomy of most Evenkis. Vasilevich and Smolyak write that "[a]ccording to legends of the Yenisey Evenks, their ancestors lived in clans. . .[which] possessed a 'river,' that is to say territory" (1964: 643). Given the movements spurred on by disease, however, occupation and control of territory may not have been especially stable. Perhaps in response to the increasing power of the state, it seems likely that territorial boundaries began to develop around trap lines and areas that were rich in fur-bearing animals.

The number and frequency of epidemics and plagues that occurred in Siberia during the Russian Imperial era has been poorly examined and is generally only recorded in footnotes or mentioned in passing. There is no doubt, however, that the effects of smallpox, measles, and other diseases were terrible and not infrequent. Epidemics, for example, are prominently featured in the oral narratives of many Evenki elders. Vasilevich also describes some of these epidemics and the movement inspired by them as people dispersed in an effort to escape the ravaging diseases (1969: 3). Tugolukov remarks that in the mid-1600s the tribute-paying population in Essei district rose dramatically. He speculates that this occurred due to an epidemic of pox [*ospa*] in the East (1985: 176).

4.2. Patterns of Russian mobility

In central-eastern Siberia the lands that lay beyond the Enisei river were not broached by Europeans until the beginning of the sixteenth century.

> In 1614 the Mangazeya Cossacks imposed the fur-tax upon the Evenks living on the Upper Tunguska [Angara]. In 1623, practically all the Evenks living near the Yenisey, on the Lower and Podkamennaya Tunguska, Vilyuy and Chona were paying the tax. [Vasilevich & Smolyak 1964: 623]

The Cossacks—the Tsar's Siberian forces—enacted a more or less systematic Russian invasion of Siberia that ended with Russian America in the late eighteenth century. The geographer Robert North notes that due to the value of the fur trade "and also because the Kazakhs of the Middle Horde continued strong to the south . . . Russian activities were virtually confined to the tayga" (1978: 15). While the Muscovite state was the prime mover in the colonization of Siberia, there existed significant ties with private interests and initiative (Collins 1991: 38). Exacting control over such a vast landscape was essentially impossible and resulted in an inability to monitor state representatives, leaving their allegiance to Tsarist policy and law largely open to individual preference. Anderson also notes that the Russian tribute economy did not impinge greatly upon Evenkis' autonomy (1995: 142), nonetheless the growing presence of Russians in the taiga had an undeniable effect on Evenki economy and social life. Indeed, "the historical evidence indicates that, at least for many households, the coerced exchange of furs *expanded* the use of space" (ibid.). Tribute, trade, missionization, the imposition of state sanctioned political and legal structures, and general cultural contact all contributed to a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

At the end of the sixteenth century, the first Cossaks crossed the Enisei in the North and established winter forts or blockhouses as sites for trade, the collection of tribute, and the enduring confirmation of Tsarist rule. Gurvich writes that in 1640

Russians arrived at the lower Viliui winter fort and recorded ninety-five tribute-paying Yakuts out of a total 380 people (Gurvich 1977: 4). Over the following years other forts in the region were established and the Tsarist presence in central-eastern Siberia solidified. A strong military presence was vital in the subjugation and settlement of Siberia; the Cossak police force hired by Moscow was governed by the *voevoda* (military governor) who held considerable power in the early development of Siberia.

The strategy for colonization, given the immensity of Siberia was to travel "along river routes, fortifying strategic points such as confluences and portages from one river system to another" (Collins 1991: 39). Siberia's river systems provided the most significant routes of travel for the Tsar's Cossaks and civil servants, as well as independent traders and missionaries. Turukhansk was strategically positioned at the confluence of the Enisei and Nizhnaia Tunguska rivers. The Nizhnaia Tunguska and the Podkamennaia Tunguska provided deep penetration into the central Siberian plateau areas while the Enisei was a major thoroughfare for riverine transport connecting Siberia to Europe via the Kara sea. It was not until the late nineteenth century, however, that this route was opened for major commercial traffic. Although the Kara sea route had been successfully traversed at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was closed in 1620 to prevent European competition in Siberia (North 1978: 38). According to Fisher, the journey from Tobolsk to Mangazeia could take two and a half months along the Enisei (1943: 175). The Nizhnaia Tunguska and Viliui rivers were a major east-west route for traffic between Yakutsk and Mangazeia-Turukhansk; this journey could take four to four and a half months (ibid.).

Travel on the lesser rivers (like the Nizhnaia Tunguska, Kochuchum, Viliui, and Podkamennaia Tunguska) necessitated flat-bottomed barges [*doschaniks*] that were motivated by sail, oar, and sometimes hauled by humans or horses from trails on the forested banks. Raymond Fisher writes that on journeys on larger rivers, like the Enisei, "*kochas*, decked boats quite similar to doshchaniks, were used" (Fisher 1943: 174). The rivers, of course, were not accessible by boat during the long winters. Even when there is no ice and snow there are only a few weeks when barges can successfully navigate the rivers. These windows of opportunity open between the spring's high waters and the autumn's low waters.

It was in the mid-1800s that paddle wheel steamers arrived on the Siberian scene. For over thirty years after their introduction "four firms connected with European Russia trading houses controlled virtually all the Siberian river steamers." (North 1978: 47). The steamers became indisputably useful vehicles in the maintenance of Tsarist control over the new colonies and presented new opportunities for missionization and resource extraction. While valuable animal pelts continued to dominate northern Siberian trade, there occurred a steady rise of mineral exploration and exploitation. When the importance of the fur trade declined in the second half of the nineteenth century alternative ventures were in a position to maintain the state's interest in Siberia, including several gold mining sites.

Father Mikhail Suslov's travel journals in the late 1800s report that much of the land south of Essei remained unexplored by Russians, confirming Vasilevich's statement that the Lower and Podkamennaia Tunguskas were relatively peaceful until the end of the nineteenth century (1969). Vasilevich discusses a variety of paths, highways, and routes cut through the taiga in Siberia and the Russian Far East, noting that social and economic relations differed in places where there were no major trade routes (1969: 180). The trade routes appear to have functioned as east-west corridors for the traffic of goods and people. As North (1978) has indicated, the majority of the rivers navigable by barge in central Siberia run from the south to the north which led to the development of overland trails to move goods between forts, towns, construction sites, and the major riverine routes. Although to the south the Moscow-Siberian highway reached Krasnoiarsk by

1735, there could be no parallel road building in the northern regions (ibid.).[24] With regard to overland travel, Fisher notes that it was "in many instances faster and more direct, especially in winter on the snow, but such travel was feasible only for short journeys, since no extensive post system existed and the cost to an individual, or even to a group, of long journeys by horse and cart or sledge was prohibitive" (1943: 174). Options for overland travel north of the Nizhnaia Tunguska were limited to reindeer conveyance, as horses were ill-suited to the densely wooded and marshy taiga.

Missionaries, traders, and state servants were obliged to seek the aid of guides and chauffeurs to ply the immense Ilimpii taiga. Guides [*kaery*] working in the tundra that borders the north of the Ilimpii area are described by Anderson in the following passage:

> At the turn of the century, *kaery* hauled supplies and people at the behest of less regimented institutions such as trading firms with government monopolies, tax-gathering Cossacks, or missionaries distributing the sacrament, surnames, and ritual calendars. [Anderson 2000b: 136]

This was the beginning of a local freight industry that persisted through to the 1970s. As I will show in the following chapter, with the modernization of the North in the period of high socialism, Evenkis narrowed their service from guiding and hauling to guiding alone.[25]

The journals of Orthodox missionary Mikhail Suslov[26] (father of I.M. Suslov) provides an example of the Church's presence in the remote Siberian taiga and tundra. Suslov's account of his 1883 journey from Turukhansk to Essei details the priest's efforts to proselytize the 'Tungus' and 'Yakuts'. He provides an important glimpse into travel in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Suslov arrived at Turukhansk by barge and negotiated for overland travel. During his journey he was forced to make several arrangements for transport as his guides refused to take him further due to the difficulty of transporting his equipment and special covered and insulated sleigh-hut [*balok*]. In addition, though it is not recorded, Suslov's journey in the autumn would have coincided with the season for hunting migratory caribou, a tremendously important event in the Evenkis' seasonal round. The significance of these journals is seen in the contrast between the rivers and the taiga. To get to Turukhansk from Europe one followed well-established colonial river-routes. Entering into the realm of the taiga, however, the priest cast away his independence along with his boat. This reliance of foreigners on Evenkis for overland travel in east-central Siberia continued into the mid-twentieth century.

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[24] To this day, despite modern road making technologies, there are few maintained roads.

[25] A friend of mine was hired by a group of 'mamothologists' to guide them through the taiga. I later learned that he had accepted their employ not only for the money they would pay him but also to watch over them. Guiding has the naive implication of taking the passengers where they want/need to go but it also has the covert implication of monitoring and limiting the passengers' experience. My Evenki friend was concerned that the paleontologists would discover that a stream on his territory [*uchastok*] was littered with high-quality coal.

Significant forts in the region included Olenek in the east and Essei in the north, as well as Turukhansk which, following the abandonment of Mangazeia in 1672, was built as the "Russian administrative and garrison base for the north" (Forsyth 1992: 46).[27] Turukhansk had a special draw for Evenkis from Ilimpii and the areas surrounding present-day Tura. Nearly all discussions with Evenki elders regarding pre-Soviet movement and migrations feature stories related to travels between the Ilimpii and Turukhansk. The previous section has given some indication of the movement of the Evenkis during the Tsarist period and, by proxy, the movement of the Russians. What is important to consider here is that the two hundred years or so of colonial encounter prior to the communist revolution was a time of great changes for the Evenkis due to state violence, epidemics, epizootics, internecine wars, and the pressure of displaced

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[26] Translated by D.G. Anderson in an unpublished manuscript.

[27] Fisher actually writes that Mangazeia burned down in 1643 and the government offices were transferred to Turukhansk "which became New Mangazeia" (1943: 98). It is unclear if Fisher is referring to the place that would be Turukhansk or if there was actually a settlement called Turukhansk at the time Mangazeia burned to the ground.

indigenous peoples from other regions. The primary means of travel, however, remained localized in the Evenkis' monopolization of taiga mobility through reindeer conveyance.

Following the Imperial Russian era, rapid technological and social change swept through the former Russian Empire. Evenki peoples' extensive travels were recast in terms of Soviet modernity and in the context of industrial mechanization. Consequently travels were made not only according to traditional routes and trails on reindeer saddle and sleigh, but were also undertaken as journeys in the modern Soviet state, on motorboats and barges and in helicopters, trains, and airplanes.

4.3. State socialism and the Soviet system of mechanized travel

> One aim of the new [Soviet] government was . . . to assert control of the northlands and to use exploits there to demonstrate Soviet technological progress. [North 1978: 110]

The civil war and Bolshevik revolution were more prolonged in Siberia than in European Russia and did not end until the late 1930s. While small battles continued to be fought years after the Socialists had established power in Moscow, Soviet revolutionaries and culture workers moved into the taiga teaching the promise of socialism. Travelling through to Krasnoiarsk and Novosibirsk from Moscow by train, they would have boarded steam-driven riverboats to take them to Turukhansk and on to the lands east of the Enisei. The first apparatus for extending socialist values and services throughout northern Siberia was the Red Tent, a mobile outlet that was at once a medical station, school, library, culture club, meeting place, and store. The red tents were unique institutions in that the Soviet social workers travelled with people on the land and were encouraged to learn their language. The fact that Soviet authorities had to develop mobile institutions in itself underscores the value placed on mobility by local peoples. As with the Orthodox missionary M. Suslov, their mobility through the taiga was contingent on Evenki paths and Evenki vehicles. The red tent institution was envisaged as a practical tool for the propagandization of the non-European natives who were officially liberated from their 'nativeness' in 1925 under "a special decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Soviet of Peoples Commissars"(Pika 1999: 2). From that time on they were collectively labelled "sparse numbered peoples" or simply "sparse peoples" [*malochislenyi narodi*].[28]

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[28] cf. Slezkine 1994 for a detailed examination of Russian colonization and Soviet neo-colonialism in Siberia and the Far East. Another common translation of *malochislenyi narodi* is 'small peoples'.

It was also at this point that the Evenkis officially ceased to be 'Tungus' as the Soviet government adopted a policy of national ethnonymic designations.

After a brutal and long civil war that was made worse by famines and epidemics, many Evenkis were attracted to the red tents and Soviet outposts through a combination of interest and necessity. This attraction was not driven by novelty, though. After several hundred years of tributary relations, European presences in the taiga had, by the 1920s, become a matter of course. The colonization of Siberia was very much a history of movement of peoples through placements and displacements. While movement in the Tsarist era was characterized by the incursion of Europeans and the migration of Evenkis and others for a multitude of reasons, the Soviet period would present whole new criteria for mobility —redefining the paths of all peoples according to officially mandated travel and transport corridors. The system of river travel established during Tsarist colonizations continued to be the determining geography of movement for the revolutionaries. In contrast, the Ilimpii Evenkis' travels continued to be distinctly associated with overland reindeer traction and short-distance river trips.

As the new Soviet government established its own patterns of travel, it began to exercise hegemony over the mobility of others. In the first half of the twentieth century the state's approach to nomadism in east-central Siberia was to regulate its cessation and to develop new forms of state-sanctioned mobility. Although forced sedentarization of nomadic peoples in the 1930s marked the beginning of the war on nomadism, it was only one among many experiments in social and economic reorganization. A list of names associated with the participation of rural Siberia in the construction of the Soviet Union includes comradeships [*tovarishchestva*], clan soviets [*rodovye sovety*], artels [*artely*], Primary Production Units [*Prosteishie Promyslovie Ob'edinenie, PPO*], collective farms [*kolkhozi*], hunting cooperatives [*koopzverpromkhozi*], state hunting enterprises [*gospromkhozi*], and state farms [*sovkhozi*]. Anderson writes that "[e]ach of these economic enterprises . . . were administrative tools for keeping closer accounts of productive activity and reforming the way in which labour was performed" (2000b: 48). The historian V.N. Uvachan wrote an entire chapter on the construction of socialism in the Soviet North which is devoted to tracking minute statistical differences in the efficacy of these various socialist enterprises (1971).

With the "development of the military-industrial complex" from the 1940s to 1960s (Tikhomirov 1997: 155), the focus of Soviet dominance shifted from nomadism to what were considered backward economies and inefficient labourers. The military-industrial complex in the central Siberian plateau during this period was most notably an exploratory endeavour which later led to the development of industry and, after the 1960s, occupation by the military. In addition to the "administrative tools" mentioned by Anderson (2000b), perceived inefficiencies in the mixed bush economies were partly dealt with through greater control of internal movement. This began in the 1930s with the introduction of the internal passport, a document that was essential for any sort of travel and one that became synonymous with a person's official identity. "The passport system at that time was clearly intended to restrict and control population movements" (Brown et al. 1982: 385). With the advent of the internal passport, subjects of the state had to seek permission to travel, and access to the means of mobility gained instant currency under harsh regulatory policing.

The state's control over the residence and mobility of Soviet citizens extended to all people in the Union as the USSR developed and defined sets of appropriate and permissible corridors of travel and movement. North writes that in the mid-1950s there emerged among Soviet citizens greater "scope for personal initiative, expressible by migration" (1978: 7). However, it is unclear to what degree this was the case for Evenkis in east-central Siberia. Any large migration of Evenkis out of their traditional homelands and away from kin in search of better paying jobs remains unreported. What is important to note is that mobility became a function of profession rather than ethnicity, although profession and ethnicity were often tightly bound together. Thus, reindeer herders, hunters, trappers, and fishers continued to travel on the land but in significantly different ways than before. Those who did not work in the taiga-based economy were employed in a variety of professions linked to the settlement. Their travels came to be the most remarkable changes to the traditional system of paths and the scope of their mobility outstretched, by all accounts, the extensive Evenki migrations of the past.

The production of the modern socialist state in remote areas took form from centralized institutions concerned with the management and control of territorial units, natural resources, and people. Evenkis were co-opted to serve in the ranks of local bureaucrats, culture workers, and instructors—a process facilitated through a growing indigenous intelligentsia. As a heterogeneous ethnic group whose ethnicity was in the process of formalization (Ssorin-Chaikov 1998), there may have been as many Evenkis sympathetic to the communist message as there were opponents. In Yuri Rytkheu's *From Nomad Tent to University* the Chukchi author writes, "The road of . . . my comrades has been very similar to my own: they entered the modern world at a turning-point where the past met the future, and their understanding of the continuity of tradition is particularly acute" (1980: 23). While the Soviet rhetoric was certainly more apt to envision the future in terms of sedentism, the post-Soviet crises facing remote Evenkis makes Rytkheu's turning-point more of a temporary camp in a nomadic migration than an enduring utopia.

Soviet Marxist-Leninist policy operated under the assumption that there existed a knowable 'path' leading through stages of civilization to the ultimate end of socialism. This ideology of progress is clearly manifest in the work of Soviet historians M.A.

Sergeev and Vasili Nikolaevich Uvachan,[29] whose books are respectively titled: *The Non-Capitalist Road of Development for the Small Peoples of the Soviet Union* (1955) and *The Road of the Northern Peoples to Socialism* (1971). All of the Siberian peoples were expected to travel this road and were hurried along by agents of the state. The journey forward was characterized as the rapid bypassing of hundreds of years of social progress. Anatolii Skachko, the head of the National Minorities Section of the early Soviet administration, wrote in 1930:

> [I]f the whole of the USSR, in the words of comrade Stalin, needs ten years to run the course of development that took Western Europe fifty to a hundred years, then the small peoples of the north [indigenous minorities], in order to catch up with the advanced nations of the USSR, must, during the same ten years, cover the road of development that took the Russian people one thousand years to cover, for even one thousand years ago the cultural level of Kievan Rus' was higher than that of the present-day small peoples of the north. [quoted in Slezkine 1994: 220]

The Soviet ideology of progress is also well represented in Uvachan's telling of a 'legend' whereby the Evenki in a single nomadic migration "crossed a mountain of one hundred years from clan organization to socialism" (1971: 4). While the evolutionary model was based on social changes there were implicit technological and social indicators marking a people's relative stage of development. For example, conical tents, bone fish lures, birch-bark canoes, clan organization, and reindeer herding were imagined to be primitive and exotic artifacts and practices to European Russians. This techno-evolutionary schema provided fundamental, evocative, and self-affirming symbols of modern progress. The graphic representation of the journey from barbarism and feudalism to socialism seemed best illustrated by the juxtaposition of so-called primitive and modern technologies. It is within this ideology of social-technological progress that we are able to consider 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' forms of mobility defined by the cultural logic of the dominant state.

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[29] Vasili Nikolaevich Uvachan was the first Evenki to hold a doctorate. His influence as an

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historian and a politician in Soviet Evenkiia was great.

4.4. Building a socialist North

> [I]t has definitely been established that the idea of Soviets [socialist councils] is close to the hearts of the mass of working people even of the most remote nations, that these organizations, the Soviets, should be adapted to the conditions of the precapitalist social system, and that the communist parties should immediately begin work in this direction in all parts of the world. [Lenin 1967 (1920): 36]

If the stated goal of the socialist revolutionaries in Siberia was in line with Lenin's nationality policy, there was little evidence of its actualization. While the autonomy of nations was the ideal, submission to the central government proved to be the reality. To the socialist revolutionaries it was clear that the Evenkis, along with other 'sparse peoples', suffered from an acute backwardness. With regards to the Nivkhis of Sakhalin Island, Bruce Grant writes that

> [i]n return for their great leap forward, Siberian indigenous peoples were granted a vision of coevalness that was rare for an otherwise largely colonial relationship. It was a vision of coevalness which was essential for many Nivkhi in seeing themselves as participants in the Sovietization movement. [1995: 157-158]

The role of indigenous people in the burgeoning Soviet internationale was to progress as rapidly as possible, leaping across several stages of imputed social-evolutionary development. In response to the question of whether so-called 'backwards' nations had to pass through the stage of capitalism on the way to socialism, communist party leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin responded in the negative. If the "revolutionary proletariat conducts systematic propaganda among them, and the Soviet governments come to their assistance with all the means at their disposal—in that event, it would be wrong to assume that the capitalist stage of development is inevitable for the backward peoples" (1920: 35). With help from their Slavic comrades, Evenkis could make the trip that took the Russians a thousand years. This was an evolutionary journey that became indelibly attached to the identity of Evenkis and all 'sparse peoples.'

The Civil War in Siberia which followed the 1914 revolution, along with a number of epidemics in the first decades of the twentieth century, contributed to a dark period of starvation and death among native northerners. In addition, this period was marked by an ongoing and sometimes intensifying exploitation of Evenkis whereby herders and their deer were commandeered as transport, food, and guides (Forsyth 1992: 251). It would seem, aside from the loss of deer and labour in the civil war, that Evenki patterns of movement did not significantly change with the revolution in government ideology. Families continued to move through the taiga in seasonal rounds that included summer fishing, berry picking, and bird hunting; autumn and winter hunting and trapping as well as annual social gatherings for trade fairs and obligatory payment of taxes.

In 1928, Smidovich, the head of the committee of the north, referring to Clan Soviets, wrote that

> [e]ach clan occupies its own territory, familiar to everyone in this clan—all borders, each stone, each creek. . . The native knows each path [in the forest] and, moreover, each animal's path. . .Each family in a clan knows its own path, and it takes this path when wandering with their tents towards certain places. They know well who belongs to what clan, who does what [in the clan], for the clan doesn't wander together—the work has to be distributed—families wander separately, each knowing the way it takes. [quoted in Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 130]

By the time the communists established their rule, there were some genuine attempts to improve the situation of the remotely located and oppressed 'natives'. Aid arrived in the form of emergency bread stores and travelling doctors and nurse-practitioners [*feldsheri*] with immunizations and medicines to fight epidemics. The moral imperative of the revolution, with regards to the Evenkis, was to release them from their debt slavery to predatory fur traders and their own exploitative brethren and set them on the road to civilization. These early years of Soviet rule can be characterized as the Soviet-

Europeans' coming to the Evenkis—bringing socialism to central Siberia. Uvachan wrote: "In the Yenissei North in 1930 the established net of cultural education comprised the Tura culture base (*kul'tbaz*), five red tents, four reading rooms, and one film projector" (1971: 173). Civilization at the time of the revolution was distinctly Slavic in nature and was equated with both modern socialism and technological-mechanical sophistication, all of which the natives were 'obviously' lacking.

Soviet efforts to render the northern economies socialist did not originally aim to radically restructure the relations of production. Siberian native people were thought to be 'pre-adapted' to socialism as they already hosted communal relations of production. The aim of the state was to industrialize their methods, giving them tools and forms of organization which were more consonant with socialism. In other words, fur-bearing animals were still trapped, wild deer and moose hunted, and small herds of domesticated reindeer were bred and domesticated but these were all undertaken within centralized organizational structures. In the early years of Soviet power, however, the limited presence of the state in the taiga curtailed any possibility of enacting total changes in the character of local economies. The Evenkis were encouraged, nonetheless, to establish their own localized cooperatives and production units as well as to set to out to develop necessary skills of 'civilization' coherent with modern Slavic socialism. By the end of 1926, the following clan Soviets were established "in the Ilimpii Tundra: Ilimpii tungus (Lake Chirinda); Turyzh tungus (Lake Murukta); Ilimpii-Agat tungus (Lake Agata); Chapogir (Miroshkol) tungus (ust'e Tura); Pankagir (Liutokil) tungus (ust'e Vivi); Chum tungus (Bol'shoi Porog); Essei Yakut (Lake Essei)" (Uvachan 1971: 143). In the early geography of Soviet settlements the common placement of villages on lakes, rather than rivers, can be taken as a sign of enduring Evenki practices of extensive overland mobility (the persistence of an Evenki system of paths). Because Soviet officials relied on Evenkis for overland carriage, the placement of settlements on lakes required state officials to employ or coerce Evenkis to convey them between river ports and these inland settlements. The remote inland situation of many Evenki settlements, in effect, hindered the easy application of economic change and suggested that Evenkis maintained a degree of autonomy from the state.

Co-opting Evenkis into the socialist project appealed to the revolutionaries' sense of the 'internationale' or the proselytizing aspect of communism. To ease the indigenous peoples into the new Soviet economy they were pushed by culture workers, like Innokenti Mikhailovich Suslov (described above), to establish simple comradeships; in terms of socialist reorganization they were actively collectivizing labour. Inevitably, these comradeships were already present in Evenki forms of hunting parties that were organized through localized kinship networks. The comradeships, artels, collective farms, and the Primary Production Units, for a short time at least, simply recast existing relations in the language of Soviet communism. According to Anderson, in the Taimyr, an evolution in types of rural institution did not occur as it did in many other areas of rural Russia:

> In archival documents for this region, *tovarishchestvo* [work-unit, comradeship] and PPO [simplest hunting unit] are used interchangeably, as are the terms *kolkhoz* [collective farm] and *artel'*. For practical purposes, most producers experienced a shift in their lives when they became members of one of the three types of 'simple work-units' from 1929 to 1937, and again when these units were reorganized into state farms from 1958 to 1968. [2000b: 48, fn.3]

As Anderson (2000b: 48) notes, the various 'simple work-units' represented only the beginning of Soviet economic intervention. While the overt changes to local economies appear to have been largely superficial, incidental changes due to fluctuating external demands for transport, meat, fish, furs, and other commodities were notable. Over time the incursion of the state into economic organization and, in general, all aspects of life, grew.

In the context of western Siberia, Andrei Golovnev writes of the importance of reindeer in the Samoyeds' and Ugrians' ability to resist Soviet authority in the 1930s and 40s (2000: 146). "It was reindeer-herding that provided groups with economic and social autonomy and made them not only independent of the state but even able to withstand it" (ibid.). I suggest that the key to the Samoyeds' and Ugrians' autonomy lay, in part, in their mobility on the tundra, which would have stood in contrast to the Soviet authorities' ongoing confinement to river travel. The Ilimpii Evenkis also enjoyed a degree of autonomy in the taiga, relying on reindeer facilitated fishing and hunting, though not reindeer pastoralism. But these avoidances were not always in resistance to a monolithic state. Indeed there are as many accounts of reindeer mobility being used in the facilitation of state enterprises as there are accounts of explicit and implicit resistances. As an openly proselytizing movement, Soviet identity was not exclusive to foreigners. Evenkis were welcomed in and encouraged to take power over their local conditions.

Kerstin Kuoljok offers a retroactively optimistic appraisal of the indispensable role of nomads in guiding "geological expeditions sent out to investigate the natural resources and to make a real contribution to these projects" (1985: 51). The ambivalence of some Evenkis towards making 'a real contribution' is evident in many accounts from the early days of Soviet rule and the overtly chaotic and often impotent statecraft practiced by agents of socialism. In one such example, Ssorin-Chaikov recounts the

> difficulties that the statistician N.V. Sushilin faced on route from Katonga up to Baikit in July, 1926. Sushilin was conducting the population census of the Podkamennaia Tunguska river, and visited trading posts and Evenki summer camps travelling upstream. Transportation ('cart duty') was one of the functions of the early Soviet indigenous collectives. . .several Evenki [were commissioned] to help Sushilin to tow his boat up to Baikit. [1998:163]

Most of the Evenkis who were 'commissioned' ended up shirking their duties, spending too much time fishing and generally not being as helpful as Sushilin would have liked. Ultimately, Sushilin towed the boat with the help of only one young man.

In the pre-Soviet era, Evenkis travelled long distances to visit Orthodox Christian sites for important holy days and to visit blockhouses and summer trading festivals to pay tribute and acquire non-local trade goods. In the Soviet era, just as some Evenkis were retreating deeper into the taiga, others travelled to the banks of major rivers to attend meetings of the regional Soviets, to organize comradeships, and to aid in the construction of culture bases. Gail Fondahl notes the communist government's 1926 adoption of a "unified act which addressed indigenous rights to. . . specific territories [and] called for the establishment of native governing structures, such as clan assemblies, clan councils, county-level Native conferences, and county-level Native executive committees" (1998: 53-4). Around the time of the revolution and subsequent civil war, revolutionaries and early communist party representatives urged all peoples to support the construction of the emerging socialist state. By 1940, 131 people of native nationalities in the Evenki National Okrug were working in a variety of administrative posts (Uvachan 1971: 250). While some Evenkis moved further into the Taiga, avoiding the river paths of the socialist organizers and other state representatives, others became involved in the production of Soviet Evenkiia—blending state socialism with their own local political goals and aspirations. For those interested, there was room to participate, if not as equals then at least to attain some level of power in the ranks of the new state.

4.5. Sedentarization and the denigration of nomadic mobility

> [A]s an unquestioned article of communist belief it was essential to bring the native peoples of Siberia into the twentieth century by telling them what was wrong with their traditional way of life and ultimately inducing them to abandon almost every aspect of it — nomadism, clan structure, tribal religion, polygamy, bride-price etc. [Forsyth 1992: 284]

> Soviet officials viewed nomadism as unclean, uncontrolled, and un-Marxist. Nomadic reindeer breeding was a primitive form of 'wretched labor' that the inevitable march of Progress could only obliterate. [Balzer 1999: 124]

When looking at the state's restructuring of social and spatial relations it is vital to consider the cultural motivations that defined appropriate and inappropriate forms of movement. State-sanctioned travel and transport in east-central Siberia differed radically from the ways in which Evenkis were travelling on, and relating to, the taiga. Clearly, it was found that nomadic movement was inappropriate, and by the time the Soviets were finally able to work on modernizing the North in the latter half of the twentieth century, nomadism was only barely tolerated in the form of a modified shift-work schedule in the production herding of post-collectivized Siberia (Vitebsky 1990). In Fondahl's words, "Soviet ideology, like that of most state powers, construed nomadism as backward" (1998: 63). The Soviet biologist P.S. Zhigunov, for example, writes in the 1960s:

> Settlement of the remaining nomadic reindeer breeders is one important problem of this branch [of the northern economy] today. The nomadic method of reindeer breeding with its outdated technique of permanent migrations hinders further development. [1968: 4]

The gross disapproval of the nomadic lifestyle has strong roots in the modern state which imagined a social evolutionary hierarchy of nations. Developed in the nineteenth century, this schema of social order was bound up in the anthropological endeavours of European academics. The earlier origins of this social Darwinism in Russia are found in the seminal works of Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, whose iconic position in Soviet history ensured a clear application of their social science to Soviet statecraft. This war on nomadism was an essential part of Lenin's position on the development of 'pre-capitalist' nations. If 'primitive' people were to 'leap forward' they had to progress beyond primitive modes of production. The concern with the classification of peoples according to a progressive scale has been treated in Slezkine's (1994) expansive review of the Russian and Soviet colonial projects in Siberia and provides an excellent account of the state's reliance on early anthropological theory and research to develop specific northern bureaucracies.

With the establishment of the modern state came the rise of modern bureaucracy and administration which necessitated non-nomadic, traceable-locatable, sedentarized populations. Nomadic mobility and the lack of fixed addresses made Evenkis difficult to administer and govern. This mobility in turn was perceived as a threat to the internal security of the state. James Forsyth writes that Evenki nomadism "came under attack by the Soviet state from the late 1920s onward. In 1927 the first Congress of small nations of the Yakut ASSR discussed among other matters the transition of the Tungus and others to a sedentary way of life" (1992: 253). In Fondahl's reckoning of Soviet thought, a sedentary way of life was equated with the "rational use of territory" (1998: 64). This rational use of territory would later be interpreted as mechanization and scientific management. The war on nomadism can be characterized by a drive towards bureaucratic convenience and efficiency, economically productive integration, internal security, and forced assimilation; all foundations of the modern state.

Along with the sedentarization of nomadic peoples, the collectivization of property and the reorganization of economic pursuits were "undertaken in the early 1930s [and were] then associated with the need to settle the nomadic peoples of the north" (Tugolukov 1963: 29). Over time the Ilimpii Evenkis' system of paths for the movement of households through the taiga in search of moose and caribou, fur-bearing animals, and pasture for their reindeer came into less frequent use. Increasingly, the taiga was seen as an inappropriate place for women and children and was reconceived as a professionalized landscape defined by compartmentalized units of resources awaiting exploitation. Following the Stalinist repressions of the 1930s and 1940s, Grant notes that in the Far East "what plagued many Nivkhi was a dramatic resettlement program introduced by Khrushchev in the late 1950s, when he attempted to streamline agricultural production by concentrating the country's rural population into agrocentres" (1995: 12). An analogy can be drawn in the Ilimpii where Evenkis were also resettled into consolidated villages.

A 1925 map of the Enisei river basin shows 'points' of indigenous economic gravitation graphically portrayed as a handful of rulered lines decorated with arrowheads, which point towards settlements situated on rivers(Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 123). The opposite ends of the arrowheads refer to the abstract space of the taiga; the draughtman's futile attempt to indicate which spaces coincided with orbiting Evenki families. The space of the taiga, from which the Evenkis materialized, represented an unknown landscape that was obviously disturbing to a government that was fostering a keen interest in controlling and disciplining people it viewed as deviant subjects and truant labourers. Sedentarization, especially in places with no roads for wheeled vehicles or rivers for boats, drew many Evenkis away from the forest where they engaged in a mixed forest economy. The withdrawal, however, was not only from an economic space of production. Evenkis were removed from *places* on the land, territories of experience and memory. In many respects, they were removed from a position of dwelling in the taiga to one of visiting it.

Sedentarization was a major step in the bureaucratization of social life in the Ilimpii. It marked an important change in family relations as it coincided with the removal of women and children from the taiga landscape (Kwon 1993; Fondahl 1998). According to Kwon, for the Orochon of Sakhalin island, "it is the relocation of women from the nomadic space to the sedentary space of life that defines the conceptual model of the past and the present" (1993: 80). In this model, the past is organized by women as the time when they were working in the forest and the present as the time when they came to the settlement. South of Evenkiia, in Northern Transbaikaliia, "the gendered nature of sedentarization has been pinpointed as one of the key causes of the demise of reindeer husbandry" (Fondahl 1998: 71). Fondahl notes that Evenki economies were seriously crippled as the state's actions "began to significantly modify [their] ability to use their traditional lands" (ibid: 66).

When houses were built in settlements, Evenkis did not necessarily use them in 'traditional' Russian ways. They used the new cabins as central bases that were visited seasonally. While Fondahl reports this as an event from the past in Transbaikaliia (1998: 65), in Ekonda it has persisted to this day as a typical component of the seasonal round for those families living on the land. The assimilation of the Soviet landscape, which was superimposed (though not totally and not without contest) upon an existing Evenki one, shows a cultural tenacity that is hard to ignore and is perhaps better characterized as an accommodation than an assimilation.[30] Slavic-Soviet built environments are bent to accommodate Evenki practices and social relations which are maintained, despite the imposition of imported organizational structures and technological systems.

Around the same time that women and children were removed from the taiga, fundamentally different paths were being introduced by the state. Evenki men, along with the men of all other nationalities of the Soviet Union, became subject to the law of conscripted military service in 1939 (Westwood 1993: 452).[31] Though some travelled to distant locales to fight in the war against Germany, it is unclear whether or not many men were conscripted until the 1960s. Most Evenki men and women in Ekonda who are old enough to remember report that they helped the war effort by working in a fishing operation located on Lake Suringde. Uvachan writes that the export of fish from the Evenki Autonomous District at the time of the war had grown nearly ten times higher than normal (1971: 259). Fishing, salting, and loading the pike and whitefish into barrels, which were then transported to Tura by reindeer sleigh, involved the majority of people living in the small settlement. In the post-war era, as obligatory military service broadened to include Ilimpii Evenkis, conscription played a role in constructing a cosmopolitan identity; men were propelled far from their central Siberian homelands to join other nationalities in service to the state. As the assault on nomadism came to a close, having created a conceptual space for the sedentarized, Sovietized Evenki nation, the state was beginning to establish a new system of mobility which followed a properly modern aesthetic of travel.

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[30] See Scott (1985) for an examination of varieties of resistance to State hegemonies.

[31] In 1967 conscription laws were changed so that at the age of eighteen men would enter the army and airforce for two years, or the navy for three (Westwood 1993:452).

When all children were compelled to go to school, as part of the state's effort to eradicate illiteracy, many women felt compelled to follow. The residential school in Tura, which was established the in 1920s, took Evenki children even greater distances from their homes. In Bloch's estimation, "large numbers of indigenous Siberians were won over to attending the residential school, but not without significant negotiation on the part of the Soviet infrastructure, and finally through outright coercion" (1996: 86). Furthermore, in the early years, she writes that the "student body was drawn largely from among the poorest members of society since the schools promised to feed and house children in addition to teaching them European ways" (ibid: 74). Beyond primary and secondary school, Evenkis who were scholastically successful were encouraged to leave the North and head to southern institutions to pursue higher education. They were then expected to return to work in their home communities. Uvachan relates the history of one such institution developed specifically for the 'sparse peoples':

> The Institute of the Peoples of the North in Leningrad was organized in 1930 on the base of the Northern Faculty of the Eastern institute. In 1936 the Institute for peoples of the North graduated 46 students of 16 different nations, from

> them 17 were party and Soviet workers, 13 pedagogues, and 16 economists. [Uvachan 1971: 250]

The majority of Evenkis going on to higher education, however, were simply integrated into regular universities and technical schools.

The alteration in the perception of travel and landscape for Evenkis living in the village is significant. In his recent monograph, Anderson (2000b) relates a story whereby his translator, a villager, was skeptical of an elder Evenki woman's claims to having travelled great distances across the taiga before the implementation of machine travel. As a settlement dweller, extensive mobility on the land was not the sort of travel with which she was familiar.

> While it is true that commuting between these points would seem impossible to a villager dependent upon the monopolistic and inefficient schedules of the civil aviation authority, the old woman's stories do resonate both with the stories and practice of present day *tundroviki* [Evenki hunters and herders] and the archival record. [Anderson 2000b: 131]

This clearly elaborates the evident fissure between a Soviet system of mechanized travel and an Evenki system of paths. The corridors of travel in the late Soviet era had rendered the paths of pre-mechanized travel little more than distant memories for many Evenkis. For others, the Evenki system of paths was a way of life remembered only by parents and grandparents.

Not long after the end of the civil war and the establishment of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', the Soviet Union set out a plan for the collectivization of all private property. As with most centralized policy, collectivization was undertaken in Siberia at a later date than the rest of the union. Anderson notes that in Khantaiskoe Ozero, in the Taimyr, collectivization of reindeer did not occur until the late 1930s (2000b: 49). Initial 'total' collectivization, or communalization, was attempted but was officially condemned by 1932, when "cooperatives were reorganized into elementary production units"(Tugolukov 1963: 25). As discussed above, these comradeships were generally formed along the same lines as pre-Soviet hunting parties.

> [T]he Ilimpii clan Soviet (in Chirinda) in January 1924 distributed 500 reindeer to poor Tunguses. These reindeer were taken from wealthy reindeer herders. In February of the same year the clan Soviet committed/obliged Kapiton Yeldogir every year to give 3 reindeer for the maintenance of his daughters, and he was forced to obey this decision. [Uvachan 1971: 138-9]

Initial collectivization was accompanied by the infamous era of Stalinist repressions when class enemies, shamans, and political dissidents were systematically 'liquidated' by the state. Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov writes that the "'Resolution on Class Stratification in the Enisei North,' adopted by the Krasnoiarsk branch of the committee for the North in 1927, singled out reindeer herding as the material base for social inequality" (1998: 144). Through creative and evasive herding, some wealthy Evenkis are said to have avoided the gaze of the state until the late 1940s (Anderson 2000b). In response to the state's policy of collectivization, whereby reindeer herds were relinquished as individual property[32] and redistributed according to the latest Soviet plans for internal economic organization, some Evenkis resisted through outright rebellion, hiding reindeer, obfuscating ownership, and slaughtering or releasing deer herds to the taiga. Resistance to the will of the state, however, was never total, homogeneous, or even universally present. Just as the Tsarist administration was strategically manipulated by Evenkis in contest with other Evenkis and neighbouring indigenous peoples, the Soviet government provided a new arena for Evenki people to play out local political struggles. While various levels of collectivization and socialist restructuring occurred in the years prior to Soviet industrialization in the 1960s, some Evenkis maintained a degree of control over the actual organization of, movement on, and interaction with the taiga.

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[32] The Soviets' misinterpretation of Evenki forms of property and redistribution led to blanket condemnations of debt slavery and other forms of unjust hierarchies of power.

In the early years of Soviet reorganization, trapping was one of the first activities to be collectivized in the Enisei basin, possibly because of the monetary importance of fur in world trade. Reindeer herding and then hunting and fishing followed the collectivization of fur hunting (Koviazin & Kuzakov 1963: 85). After trapping, reindeer herding was identified as an economic activity that was in need of socialist attention not just because of its centrality in land transport, but also because of the importance of reindeer in the formation of Evenki wealth. At least in the minds of Soviet officials, 'primitive' forms of capital accumulation were associated with the Evenki 'princes' [*kniazi*] who were commonly accused of labour exploitation and enforcing service through others' debt repayment obligations. Collectivizing the reindeer simultaneously broke Evenki autonomy and self-sufficiency through the disabling of their internal economy while providing for the basis of Soviet economic rationalization. While the professionalization of Evenki work would not really appear in full force until the 1960s, the foundations were established through the collectivization of wealth and the bureaucratization of the economy.

As was noted above, Ekonda was moved from its original site near lake Murukte to the confluence of the Viliui and Viliuikan rivers at a time when the Soviet government was re-examining its administration of remote regions. A drive for efficiency led to the consolidation of remotely located settlements. Consolidation, which mostly took place in the North in the 1950s and 1960s, was rationalized as a way to reduce "transport expenditures (for cargo and people) to remote villages, economize on social infrastructure expenditures, and facilitate governing and administration of the population (and their economic activities)" (Fondahl 1998: 67). Ekonda, today, is made up of a composite of people from a variety of regions and settlements that existed prior to consolidation. The issue of water potability was at least one, and possibly the official, explanation for the abandonment of 'old' Ekonda. The growing settlement would have necessitated a